PARTISAN REVIEW

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1951

WILLIAM FAULKNER
The Jail

ANDRÉ MALRAUX
Art and the Illusion of the Folk

LIONEL TRILLING
The Roots of Modern Taste

JAMES BURNHAM
Parakeets and Parchesi:
An Indian Memorandum

CZESLAW MILOSZ
The Happiness Pill

HANS MEYERHOFF
"The New Yorker" in Hollywood

Reviews and poems by Richard Chase, F. W. Dupee, Francis Fergusson, Barbara Guest, Irving Howe, Roy Marz, Delmore Schwartz, May Swenson

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ANDRÉ MALRAUX

ART, POPULAR ART, AND THE ILLUSION OF THE FOLK

Folk art no longer exists because the "folk" no longer exists. The modern masses, bound even in rural places to urban civilization, are as different from the craftsmen and the peasants of the great monarchies as from the people of the Middle Ages. The word "people," when Cardinal de Retz applied it to the Parisians, already sounded false; if the Cardinal had not limited himself to Paris, he would have said bourgeoisie or populace. The people that bought religious images and sang popular songs was born of the oldest civilizations of the earth, would have been partly at home in them, and could scarcely read.

When the radio took the place of the yarn, magazine photography of woodcuts, the detective novel the place of the novel of chivalry, we began to speak of mass art; that is, we confused the art and the media of fiction. There is a novel of the masses, but no Stendhal of the masses; a music for the masses, but no Bach nor Beethoven, whatever people say; a painting for the masses, no Piero della Francesca nor Michelangelo.

It is generally admitted that fiction achieves its effect upon the collective imagination by its compensatory action, and because each of us identifies himself with one hero. The films in which the millionaire marries the seamstress do not, however, dominate the cinema any more than the tales in which the prince marries the milkmaid dominate legend, or than Hercules dominates Greek or Roman mythology. The legend of Saturn is not a source of compensation. Nor is the world of fiction the same as that of fairy tales. The latter hint at this world, but they are drawn back toward it. Cloud-cuckoo-land is without adventures, it is marvelous in itself.

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The Marvelous, like the Sacred (of which it is a kind of minor domain), belongs to the Altogether-Different, a world sometimes consoling and sometimes terrifying, but (to begin with) different from the real world. Although servants dream of marrying princes, preferably charming ones, *Cinderella* is not a pulp novel, for the rats changed into footmen, the pumpkin into a carriage, are as essential to the story as is the marriage. The tale is the story of Cinderella, also of an enchantment; the protagonist of all fairy tales is the fairy. The immense success of *Fantomas* did not lie only in Fantomas; in our crime novels, the heroic gangster took the place of the inspired detective, then the ignoble gangster (by orders from above) supplanted the heroic gangster; the audience has remained the same, as has the world of these fictions.

The Marvelous, home of a liberated humanity, has given asylum to different peoples and then annexed them all. But the history of these successive invasions is revealing. If the eternal tragedy that dwells there, from Saturn to Yseult's love philtre, has never driven out the old fairy folk, nevertheless the fairy tales became Christianized, the Golden Legend spread abroad, and the novels of chivalry were born. Rustling with angels, saints, brave knights, demons, and the strange inhabitants of the eternal realm of the exotic, the forest of the Imaginary became the immense echo of medieval man, as Fable had been that of ancient man. Collective dreaming was for a long time the great general human choir.

But one day, the hero ceased to exist: more precisely, he lost his soul.

Beginning with the eighteenth century, the outlaw settles—and more so each century—in the country of the imaginary. The birth of the gentleman thief, a personage as real as Puss-in-Boots, is not at all of the same order as the later idealization of the *condottiere*. If fiction disappears from painting in the middle of the nineteenth century, it may be because painters no longer believe in the old legendary characters, nor in those of the new fiction. Delacroix paints legend as seen through poetry, not through the novel. Nobody paints the heroes of Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris,* although these invade the imagination of all Europe; beginning with Balzac, contemporary fiction is interpreted by illustrators. Flaubert is born. Art will seek the

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marvelous in exoticism and history, whose exploration destroys bit by bit the legendary tone. The last French "positive hero" is Napoleon: Meissonier, a prudent man, represents him as already beaten; and one can scarcely imagine his portrait by Cézanne. No figure took his place. Don Quixote was crazy, but he wanted to be a true hero: a broken inner world is matched by an imaginary world deserted by its saints and its heroes.

It is unwise to think that the emotions modern crowds expect from the arts are necessarily profound. On the contrary, they are often superficial and puerile, and scarcely go beyond the amorous and Christian sentimentalities, the taste for violence, a little cruelty, collective vanity and sensuality. Men and women who were united by the Resistance into a kind of fraternal group expect from the cinema a romantic novel rather than the expression of their fraternity; and the pleasures of romance do not unite, but isolate men. Thousands of human beings can be united by faith or by hope in the revolution, but (except in the language of the propagandists) they are not then masses, but peers: united often by action, always by what, in their own eyes, counts more than themselves. *All collective virtue is born of communion.* In civilizations united by a Truth, usually a transcendent one, art has nourished the highest fiction, the highest part of man. But if the collective belief is broken, fiction is liberated and discovers its own efficaciousness. Fiction has need of an imaginary world, not of an ideal one. Art strives to submit fiction to the demands of quality; but fiction can dispense with them—and the commercial cinema can take the place of the cathedrals. It is then that the real fairy element takes refuge in the comic, and the appeasing arts proliferate upon the broken inner world, the discordant imaginary world.

It is odd that no word, except arts, designates the common character of what we call, separately, bad painting, bad architecture, bad music, etc. The word "painting" not only defines a domain in which art is *possible;* the Sistine ceiling and the cheapest chromo both belong to it. Now, what makes painting an art for us is not an arrangement of colors on a surface, but the quality of this arrangement. Perhaps we have only one word because bad painting has not existed for very long. There is no bad Gothic painting. Not

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that all Gothic painting is good: but the difference that separates Giotto from the most mediocre of his imitators is not of the same kind as that which separates Renoir from the caricaturists of the *Vie Parisienne* on the one hand, and from the academicians on the other. The works of a civilization possessing a faith all express the same artistic attitude, imply a single "function" for painting. Giotto and the Gaddi are separated by talent, Degas and his disciple Bonnat by a schism, Renoir and "suggestive" painting by what? By the fact that this last, totally subjected to the spectator, is a form of advertising which aims at selling itself. If there exists only one word to designate what makes of lines, sounds, words the expression of the greatest human language, and also what assures their almost physical action (for "music" is Bach, but also the most syrupy tango, and even the sound of instruments), it is because there was a time when the distinction between these things had no point: instruments only played real music then, for there was no other. The conflict between the arts and their means is in no way eternal: in painting, it begins with the school of Bologna, i.e., with eclecticism. It would have been inconceivable in the Romanesque period. The symbol of art *understood* by the folk of a coherent (but non-totalitarian) civilization is the Dark Virgin: up to the beginning of this century, many Virgins of the great pilgrimages were dark, because being thus less human, they were more sacred. The cover of *Fantomas,* magazine illustrations, the portraits of Hitler and Stalin are not Dark Virgins. The only plastic art that has spoken to the masses without lying to them was based, not on realism, but on a dream hierarchy ordered by the superhuman: from Sumer to the cathedrals, this developed before the idea of art was conceived.

The success of the appeasing arts is less due to a technique than is commonly held. No doubt, the triumph of a tune throughout the Western world is closer to the success of Bebé Cadum's advertising or a propaganda slogan than to the glory of J. S. Bach; song, publicity, and propaganda turn an elementary and powerful feeling to the benefit of their author; (a bomber above Bebé Cadum in the talcum powder ad would make a better peace poster than Picasso's dove). But their effectiveness comes from a discovery that their technique invokes but does not supply. This discovery is a crystallization of the

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collective sensibility, made by a man subject to this sensibility—sometimes for the benefit of another person who is not.

Now, the sensibility is vulnerable to those means (sounds, rhymes, words, forms, colors) which were and are still those of the arts. It is all a question of the end these means are to serve. That an artist can express with genius the feelings of a people, even a sect, to which he belongs, Goya and Rembrandt and many others have shown; and it is rare that the artist is only himself. He does not set himself up against the masses in the manner of an aristocrat: in the ages of faith, his genius was inseparable from the dialogue he maintained with the masses. He sets himself up against the modern masses with regard to what they expect of him; like Christopher Columbus against those who wanted to forbid his expedition. And these collective groups are so far from being identical with the people or the proletariat (although both may belong to them) that they were aristocratic and ecclesiastical in the eighteenth century; and the appeasing art, when it became official, owed its unprecedented triumph to the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century.

But the victory of the independent artists dazzles us so that we believe the official artists to be as dead as Jesuit painting. Thus we only see the enveloping atmosphere when its depth makes it blue. For the official aesthetic, driven out of painting, reigns everywhere else; in 1950, the spirit of Rochegrosse and Bouguereau is more influential than the reproductions of Picasso. There may be less hypocrisy than formerly (some of the prudishness has been left out), but it is more powerful. The catalogue of the Salon for 1905 does not resemble that of the 1950 Independents, but look at our illustrated weeklies, whatever the political regime: the West prefers Cabanel to Horace Vernet, and Russia prefers Rochegrosse, whom it imitates, to Cabanel, whom it forbids. Like bourgeois painting of which they are the direct heirs, the "arts" desired by the masses who have lost their myth are arts *in submission*. These arts aim to act on those to whom they are addressed for the exclusive benefit of those who foster these arts. Taken together, and apart from some contemporary successes in humor—Charlie Chaplin's work is a true fairy tale, but a sentimental one—these are arts of lobotomy. Quality, when they care to have it, is not their *raison d'être,* but one of their means. We like some poster artists of great talent. We know that they are not

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Michelangelo, nor even Klee. Still they are appreciated in the countries of an old artistic culture more for the charm of their talent than for the effectiveness of their illustrations: for the most effective advertising is the American, which plays upon conditioned reflexes and creates for its confections the Imaginary Museum of consumers' goods. Moreover, the masses are less sensitive to the advertisement, which they do not take seriously, than to the art photo of the magazines and to the cinema. Both the film and the detective story aim at "getting bought"; therefore they act physically on their readers or spectators by their narrative technique, their recourse to sexuality and violence. The Soviet film aims to set up an imaginary world, and does so by substituting for the revolutionary epic, or for a threatened Russia, a pious legend and all that this implies; just as Soviet propaganda conjures up a similar world in distorting Marxism into the most elementary Manicheanism. Did the popular songs of old aim to sell themselves? There were sellers indeed for religious images and the novels of chivalry, but the intoxication which every author of detective novels hopes to induce in his reader is not the same as that provided by so many adventures of Don Quixote. Tales and paintings of martyrs, even when they are baroque, do not provide "blood in chapter one." The characteristic of these appeasing arts is not, however, their violence: in many great works we find the "attack" upon the reader or the spectator, and we admire Grunewald and the painters of the *Pietà,* Shakespeare, Balzac, and Dostoevsky—and Beethoven. Nor is this characteristic found only in the employment of physical stimuli: the stimuli of sentimentalism and sensuality are the same as those of violence (weeping, fainting, suffering . . .) and the great artists are not always without them. The characteristic of these arts lies, rather, in the orientation of these means: the violence of Shakespeare is in the service of Prospero, that of Grunewald or Dostoevsky in the service of Christ.

For every true art puts its means, even the most brutal of them, in the service of a part of man obscurely or vehemently chosen. There is no more blood in the most violent gangster novel than in the *Oresteia* or *Oedipus Rex*: but blood does not have the same significance in both. "Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," says Macbeth; but the witches, by showing the orchestration of destiny behind all the noise of killing,

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make *Macbeth* mean something. Grunewald and Goya mean something. Let us not confuse the pin-up photos with the nudes of Greece and India, whose very different sensuality bound man to the cosmos. There is no art without style, and every style implies that man has a meaning, is oriented by some supreme value—proclaimed or secret—which was called art or painting, as still happens in modern art. The appeasing media, on the contrary, no longer bind man to values, but to sensations; he struggles against nothingness through a succession of moments, whereas every art and every civilization have bound man to duration if not to eternity.

That is why it is necessary to distinguish, in every artistic field, the art itself from its means of achievement and from its power of diffusion. It is useless to ask whether the means of expression of the cinema permit it to become an art: for a long time these means have been superior to those of the theater. But the convincing force with which the cinema incarnates fiction, the breadth of its audience, do not alter the fact that it can, like the novel, either meet or conquer the masses, not be passive before them. The novel is born by a process of refinement from the popular tale, but it has become the privileged expression of the tragic and of human experience: *Crime and Punishment* is not an excellent detective story, it is an excellent novel whose plot deals with crime. The novel and cinema for the masses require a single talent, that for narration which assures the effect of the novelist upon his reader, just as sentimental sensuality assures that of dance music, and just as the talent for representation—in the service of a changeable convention—assures that of painting. No genius can make a great work out of a catering fiction: Victor Hugo did not succeed in transforming his conventional *Misérables* into a mythology. Writing can be a decoration stuck on a wall, but art is the digging below the surface: it will not stick on the wall.

The "appeasing arts" are, then, in no sense inferior arts; they act in an opposite direction from the arts; they are, so to speak, anti-arts. And they show us at what point the grip of determinisms, conditionings, and sociologies, so powerful over artistic means, is distinct from the grip which they aim to exercise over the very nature of art. Our civilization—although it often sees in its own art

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only a superior, sharpened and refined taste—selects among all the forms of the past those in which the artist transmits now his divine side and now his demoniacal side. It matters little to our amateurs that they do not know the gods of the caves, or that the idea of art was unknown to the Magdalenians. You try in vain to work up any passion in them for the lesser Dutch who were not Vermeer. They feel that in Greece and in the Renaissance men were in agreement with the gods, and were not reduced to self-gratification. They affirm that the art of pathos found in the master of the *Pietà* of Villeneuve and the specialized art of Braque, different as they are, have the same enemy. The arts of the religions in which we do not believe act on us more powerfully than the profane arts, or those of religions that have been reduced to custom. For China there are the Chang vases, the Wei sculpture, Sung painting; for India the Brahmanism and Buddhism of the high periods; the greatness of Greece dies with Phidias. We suspect why our furiously profane art resurrects so many religious arts, and we begin to see an order among these apparently confused resurrections; they welcome whatever is opposed to appeasement, or what gives us the illusion of it—and they reject everything that serves it.

On different levels, the naive, the insane, children, primitives, barbarians and savages are one with the sculptors of the high periods in that they seem to neglect the spectator. The arts of the coherent civilizations of the past had the sound of a monologue—sometimes an imperious monologue—because every dialogue with the spectator was subordinated to the dialogue which they carried on with their gods or with the part of man they had focused upon. We cannot be mistaken about it. If we hardly know the feelings of the Egyptian sculptors of the Old Empire, we do sense that they were not the feelings that moved Greuze. As soon as the art of mere appeasement is born, we begin to be repelled. Hence our admiration for the great baroque creators, from Michelangelo to Greco, and our disdain for the established baroque; our admiration for certain paintings of Rubens, our irritation before others. Hence our equivocal relationship with Raphael and our indifference toward his disciples. Stendhal admired Leonardo as the master of the Lombard school, but we admire in Leonardo the pictorial intelligence that separates *Mona*

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Lisa from all the *Herodiads*. The school of Bologna has sunk in our judgment. In the great English portrait painters a concern with rank makes their portraits seem emptier than their landscapes—even to themselves, occasionally. We respond to the second-rate primitives, but not to the mediocre art of the eighteenth century. The reason is that this art is made to order not only because the painter is paid: it caters to the sentimentality or the licentiousness of the patron, and to his alone. Boucher is neither Titian nor Rubens; Greuze knew so well what he was doing that certain sketches of his resemble the paintings of Fragonard, not his own. With Fragonard, with Chardin, art passes into the service of painting itself, and everything changes. But had not painters been held in greater submission by the Church? We accept, however, only those who believed sincerely that the Church united them to God: the Gothic and not the Jesuit painters. Suger chose the foreground figures of St. Denis; the sculptors thought he chose them well—and they were right. To pray in common is not the common pleasure of going to mass on Sunday; like the art of Boucher and his pupils, every ambitious art of appeasement lives on complicity, not on communion.

Despite our desire to annex everything, the world in which Christ was the perfect man, the world of Nicholas of Cusa and Raphael, becomes more and more strange to us. But its art was a great conquest, the last of a Christian world as it was the first of a new world. Beginning with the seventeenth century, the art of appeasement will take over all the positions that Christianity abandons, until it proclaims its final triumph in the spicy engraving, the sentimental declamation and the pious painting. Appeasement is very different from the feeling on which civilizations base their relation with the cosmos and with death: men gratify their tastes, but are *dedicated* to values. . . .Their true values are those for which they would accept poverty, derision, and death. That is why in the eighteenth century justice and reason are real values, but not sentimentality and licentiousness. That is why painting, as conceived by the modern painters, is a real value. And whatever is born of the desire for gratification—like sentimentality and Alexandrine sensuality, like everything that rejects at once our art and our living culture—*is born of the death of values* and does not replace them.

(*Translated by William Barrett*)

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William Faulkner

THE JAIL*
(Nor Even Yet Quite Relinquish—)

So, although in a sense the jail was both older and less old than the courthouse, in actuality, in time, in observation and memory, it was older even than the town itself. Because there was no town until there was a courthouse, and no courthouse until (like some unsentient unweaned creature torn violently from the dug of its dam) the floorless lean-to rabbit-hutch housing the iron chest was reft from the log flank of the jail and transmogrified into a by-neo-Greek-out-of-Georgian-England edifice set in the center of what in time would be the town Square (as a result of which, the town itself had moved one block south—or rather, no town then and yet, the courthouse itself the catalyst: a mere dusty widening of the trace, trail, pathway in a forest of oak and ash and hickory and sycamore and flowering catalpa and dogwood and judas tree and persimmon and wild plum, with on one side old Alec Holston's tavern and coaching-yard, and a little farther along, Ratcliffe's trading-post-store and the blacksmith's, and diagonal to all of them, *en face* and solitary beyond the dust, the log jail; moved—the town —complete and intact, one block southward, so that now, a century and a quarter later, the coaching-yard and Ratcliffe's store were gone and old Alec's tavern and the blacksmith's were a hotel and a garage, on a main thoroughfare true enough but still a business side-street, and the jail across from them, though transformed also now into two storeys of Georgian brick by the hand ((or anyway pocketbooks)) of Sartoris and Sutpen and Louis Grenier, faced not even on a side-street but on an alley);

And so, being older than all, it had seen all: the mutation and the change: and, in that sense, had recorded them (indeed, as Gavin

* This is a section from *Requiem for a Nun,* to be published this fall by Random House.

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Stevens, the town lawyer and the county amateur Cincinnatus, was wont to say, if you would peruse in unbroken—ay, overlapping—continuity the history of a community, look not in the church registers and the courthouse records, but beneath the successive layers of calsomine and creosote and whitewash on the walls of the jail, since only in that forcible carceration does man find the idleness in which to compose, in the gross and simple terms of his gross and simple lusts and yearnings, the gross and simple recapitulations of his gross and simple heart); invisible and impacted, not only beneath the annual inside creosote-and-whitewash of bullpen and cell, but on the blind outside walls too, first the simple mud-chinked log ones and then the symmetric brick, not only the scrawled illiterate and repetitive unimaginative doggerel and the perspectiveless almost prehistoric sexual picture-writing, but the images, the panorama not only of the town of its days and years until a century and better had been accomplished, filled not only with its mutation and change from a halting-place: to a community: to a settlement: to a village: to a town, but with the shapes and motions, the gestures of passion and hope and travail and endurance, of the men and women and children in their successive overlapping generations long after the subjects which had reflected the images were vanished and replaced and again replaced, as when you stand say alone in a dim and empty room and believe, hypnotised beneath the vast weight of man's incredible and enduring *Was,* that perhaps by turning your head aside you will see from the corner of your eye the turn of a moving limb—a gleam of crinoline, a laced wrist, perhaps even a Cavalier plume—who knows? provided there is will enough, perhaps even the face itself three hundred years after it was dust—the eyes, two jellied tears filled with arrogance and pride and satiety and knowledge of anguish and foreknowledge of death, saying no to death across twelve generations, asking still the old same unanswerable question three centuries after that which reflected them had learned that the answer didn't matter, or—better still—had forgotten the asking of it—in the shadowy fathomless dreamlike depths of an old mirror which has looked at too much too long;

But not in shadow, not this one, this mirror, these logs: squatting

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in the full glare of the stump-pocked clearing during those first summers, solitary on its side of the dusty widening marked with an occasional wheel but mostly by the prints of horses and men: Pettigrew's private pony express until he and it were replaced by a monthly stagecoach from Memphis, the race horse which Jason Compson traded to Ikkemotubbe, old Mohataha's son and the last ruling Chickasaw chief in that section, for a square of land so large that, as the first formal survey revealed, the new courthouse would have been only another of Compson's outbuildings had not the town Corporation bought enough of it (at Compson's price) to forefend themselves being trespassers, and the saddle-mare which bore Doctor Habersham's worn black bag (and which drew the buggy after Doctor Habersham got too old and stiff to mount the saddle), and the mules which drew the wagon in which, seated in a rocking chair beneath a French parasol held by a Negro slave girl, old Mohataha would come to town on Saturdays (and came that last time to set her capital X on the paper which ratified the dispossession of her people forever, coming in the wagon that time too, barefoot as always but in the purple silk dress which her son, Ikkemotubbe, had brought her back from France, and a hat crowned with the royal-colored plume of a queen, beneath the slave-held parasol still and with another female slave child squatting on her other side holding the crusted slippers which she had never been able to get her feet into, and in the back of the wagon the petty rest of the unmarked Empire flotsam her son had brought to her which was small enough to be moved; driving for the last time out of the woods into the dusty widening before Ratcliffe's store where the Federal land agent and his marshal waited for her with the paper, and stopped the mules and sat for a little time, the young men of her bodyguard squatting quietly about the halted wagon after the eight-mile walk, while from the gallery of the store and of Holston's tavern the settlement—the Ratcliffes and Compsons and Peabodys and Pettigrews ((not Grenier and Holston and Habersham, because Louis Grenier declined to come in to see it, and for the same reason old Alec Holston sat alone on that hot afternoon before the smoldering log in the fireplace of his taproom, and Doctor Habersham was dead and his son had already departed for the West with his bride, who was Mohataha's granddaughter, and his father-in-

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law, Mohataha's son, Ikkemotubbe))—looked on, watched: the inscrutable ageless wrinkled face, the fat shapeless body dressed in the cast-off garments of a French queen, which on her looked like the Sunday costume of the madame of a rich Natchez or New Orleans brothel, sitting in a battered wagon inside a squatting ring of her household troops, her young men dressed in their Sunday clothes for traveling too: then she said, 'Where is this Indian territory?' And they told her: West. 'Turn the mules west,' she said, and someone did so, and she took the pen from the agent and made her X on the paper and handed the pen back and the wagon moved, the young men rising too, and she vanished across that summer afternoon to that terrific and infinitesimal creak and creep of ungreased wheels, herself immobile beneath the rigid parasol, grotesque and regal, bizarre and moribund, like obsolescence's self riding off the stage its own obsolete catafalque, looking not once back, not once back toward home);

But most of all, the prints of men—the fitted shoes which Doctor Habersham and Louis Grenier had brought from the Atlantic seaboard, the cavalry boots in which Alec Holston had ridden behind Francis Marion, and—more myriad almost than leaves, outnumbering all the others lumped together—the moccasins, the deerhide sandals of the forest, worn not by the Indians but by white men, the pioneers, the long hunters, as though they had not only vanquished the wilderness but had even stepped into the very footgear of them they dispossessed (and mete and fitting so, since it was by means of his feet and legs that the white man conquered America; the closed and split U's of his horses and cattle overlay his own prints always, merely consolidating his victory);—(the jail) watched them all, red men and white and black—the pioneers, the hunters, the forest men with rifles, who made the same light rapid soundless toed-in almost heelless prints as the red men they dispossessed and who in fact dispossessed the red men for that reason: not because of the grooved barrel but because they could enter the red man's milieu and make the same footprints that he made; the husbandman printing deep the hard heels of his brogans because of the weight he bore on his shoulders: axe and saw and plow-stock, who dispossessed the forest man for the obverse reason: because with his saw and axe he sim-

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ply removed, obliterated, the milieu in which alone the forest man could exist; then the land speculators and the traders in slaves and whiskey who followed the husbandmen, and the politicians who followed the land speculators, printing deeper and deeper the dust of that dusty widening, until at last there was no mark of Chickasaw left in it any more; watching (the jail) them all, from the first innocent days when Doctor Habersham and his son and Alex Holston and Louis Grenier were first guests and then friends of Ikkemotubbe's Chickasaw clan; then an Indian agent and a land-office and a trading-post, and suddenly Ikkemotubbe and his Chickasaws were themselves the guests without being friends of the Federal Government; then Ratcliffe, and the trading-post was no longer simply an Indian trading-post, though Indians were still welcome, of course (since, after all, they owned the land or anyway were on it first and claimed it), then Compson with his race horse and presently Compson began to own the Indian accounts for tobacco and calico and jean pants and cooking-pots on Ratcliffe's books (in time he would own Ratcliffe's books too) and one day Ikkemotubbe owned the race horse and Compson owned the land itself, some of which the city fathers would have to buy from him at his price in order to establish a town; and Pettigrew with his tri-weekly mail, and then a monthly stage and the new faces coming in faster than old Alex Holston, arthritic and irascible, hunkered like an old surly bear over his smoldering hearth even in the heat of summer (he alone now of that original three, since old Grenier no longer came in to the settlement, and old Doctor Habersham was dead, and the old doctor's son, in the opinion of the settlement, had already turned Indian and renegade even at the age of twelve or fourteen) any longer made any effort, wanted, to associate names with; and now indeed the last moccasin print vanished from that dusty widening, the last toed-in heelless light soft quick long-striding print pointing west for an instant, then trodden from the sight and memory of man by a heavy leather heel engaged not in the traffic of endurance and hardihood and survival, but in money—taking with it (the print) not only the moccasins but the deer-hide leggins and jerkin too, because Ikkemotubbe's Chickasaws now wore Eastern factory-made jeans and shoes sold them on credit out of Ratcliffe's and Compson's general store, walking in to the settlement on the white man's Satur-

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day, carrying the alien shoes rolled neatly in the alien pants under their arms, to stop at the bridge over Compson's creek long enough to bathe their legs and feet before donning the pants and shoes, then coming on to squat all day on the store gallery eating cheese and crackers and peppermint candy (bought on credit too out of Compson's and Ratcliffe's showcase) and now not only they but Habersham and Holston and Grenier too were there on sufferance, anachronistic and alien, not really an annoyance yet but simply a discomfort;

Then they were gone; the jail watched that: the halted ungreased unpainted wagon, the span of underfed mules attached to it by fragments of Eastern harness supplemented by raw deer-hide thongs, the nine young men—the wild men, tameless and proud, who even in their own generation's memory had been free and, in that of their fathers, the heirs of kings—squatting about it, waiting, quiet and composed, not even dressed in the ancient forest-softened deerskins of their freedom but in the formal regalia of the white man's inexplicable ritualistic sabbaticals: broadcloth trousers and white shirts with boiled-starch bosoms (because they were traveling now; they would be visible to outworld, to strangers:—and carrying the New England-made shoes under their arms too since the distance would be long and walking was better barefoot), the shirts collarless and cravatless true enough and with the tails worn outside, but still board-rigid, gleaming, pristine, and in the rocking chair in the wagon, beneath the slave-borne parasol, the fat shapeless old matriarch in the regal sweat-stained purple silk and the plumed hat, barefoot too of course but, being a queen, with another slave to carry her slippers, putting her cross to the paper and then driving on, vanishing slowly and terrifically to the slow and terrific creak and squeak of the ungreased wagon—apparently and apparently only, since in reality it was as though, instead of putting an inked cross at the foot of a sheet of paper, she had lighted the train of a mine set beneath a dam, a dyke, a barrier already straining, bulging, bellying, not only towering over the land but leaning, looming, imminent with collapse, so that it only required the single light touch of the pen in that brown illiterate hand, and the wagon did not vanish slowly and terrifically from the scene to the terrific sound of its un-

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greased wheels, but was swept, hurled, flung not only out of Yoknapatawpha County and Mississippi but the United States too, immobile and intact—the wagon, the mules, the rigid shapeless old Indian woman and the nine heads which surrounded her—like a float or a piece of stage property dragged rapidly into the wings across the very backdrop and amid the very bustle of the property-men setting up for the next scene and act before the curtain had even had time to fall;

There was no time; the next act and scene itself clearing its own stage without waiting for property-men; or rather, not even bothering to clear the stage but commencing the new act and scene right in the midst of the phantoms, the fading wraiths of that old time which had been exhausted, used up, to be no more and never return: as though the mere and simple orderly ordinary succession of days was not big enough, comprised not scope enough, and so weeks and months and years had to be considered and compounded into one burst, one surge, one soundless roar filled with one word: town: city: with a name: Jefferson; men's mouths and their incredulous faces (faces to which old Alex Holston had long since ceased trying to give names or, for that matter, even to recognise) were filled with it; that was only yesterday, and by tomorrow the vast bright rush and roar had swept the very town one block south, leaving in the tideless backwater of an alley on a side-street the old jail which, like the old mirror, had already looked at too much too long, or like the patriarch who, whether or not he decreed the conversion of the mud-chinked cabin into a mansion, had at least foreseen it, is now not only content but even prefers the old chair on the back gallery, free of the rustle of blueprints and the uproar of bickering architects in the already dismantled living-room;

It (the old jail) didn't care, tideless in that backwash, insulated by that city block of space from the turmoil of the town's birthing, the mud-chinked log walls even carcerant of the flotsam of an older time already on its rapid way out too: an occasional runaway slave or drunken Indian or shoddy would-be heir of the old tradition of Mason or Hare or Harpe (biding its time until, the courthouse finished, the jail too would be translated into brick, but, unlike the courthouse, merely a veneer of brick, the old mud-chinked logs of

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the ground floor still intact behind the patterned and symmetric sheathe); no longer even watching now, merely cognizant, remembering: only yesterday was a wilderness ordinary, a store, a smithy, and already today was not a town, a city, but the town and city: named; not a courthouse but *the* courthouse, rising surging like the fixed blast of a rocket, not even finished yet but already looming, beacon focus and lodestar, already taller than anything else, out of the rapid and fading wilderness—not the wilderness receding from the rich and arable fields as tide recedes, but rather the fields themselves, rich and inexhaustible to the plow, rising sunward and airward out of swamp and morass, themselves thrusting back and down brake and thicket, bayou and bottom and forest, along with the copeless denizens—the wild men and animals—which once haunted them, waiting, dreaming, imagining, no other—lodestar and pole, drawing the people—the men and women and children, the maidens, the marriageable girls and the young men, flowing, pouring in with their tools and goods and cattle and slaves and gold money, behind ox- or mule-teams, by steamboat up Ikkemotubbe's old river from the Mississippi; only yesterday Pettigrew's pony express had been displaced by a stage-coach, yet already there was talk of a railroad less than a hundred miles to the north, to run all the way from Memphis to the Atlantic Ocean;

Going fast now: only seven years, and not only was the courthouse finished, but the jail too: not a new jail of course but the old one veneered over with brick, into two storeys, with white trim and iron-barred windows: only its face lifted, because behind the veneer were still the old ineradicable bones, the old ineradicable remembering: the old logs immured intact and lightless between the tiered symmetric bricks and the whitewashed plaster, immune now even to having to look, see, watch that new time which in a few years more would not even remember that the old logs were there behind the brick or had ever been, an age from which the drunken Indian had vanished, leaving only the highwayman, who had wagered his liberty on his luck, and the runaway nigger who, having no freedom to stake, had wagered merely his milieu; that rapid, that fast: Sutpen's untameable Paris architect long since departed, vanished (one hoped) back to wherever it was he had made that aborted midnight try

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to regain and had been overtaken and caught in the swamp, not (as the town knew now) by Sutpen and Sutpen's wild West Indian headman and Sutpen's bear hounds, nor even by Sutpen's destiny nor even by his (the architect's) own, but by that of the town: the long invincible arm of Progress itself reaching into that midnight swamp to pluck him out of that bayed circle of dogs and naked Negroes and pine torches, and stamped the town with him like a rubber signature and then released him, not flung him away like a squeezed-out tube of paint, but rather (inattentive too) merely opening its fingers, its hand; stamping his (the architect's) imprint not on just the courthouse and the jail, but on the whole town, the flow and trickle of his bricks never even faltering, his molds and kilns building the two churches and then that Female Academy a certificate from which, to a young woman of North Mississippi or West Tennessee, would presently have the same mystic significance as an invitation dated from Windsor castle and signed by Queen Victoria would for a young female from Long Island or Philadelphia;

That fast now: tomorrow, and the railroad did run unbroken from Memphis to Carolina, the light-wheeled bulb-stacked wood-burning engines shrieking among the swamps and cane-brakes where bear and panther still lurked, and through the open woods where browsing deer still drifted in pale bands like unwinded smoke: because they—the wild animals, the beasts—remained, they coped, they would endure; a day, and they would flee, lumber, scuttle across the clearings already overtaken and relinquished by the hawk-shaped shadows of mail planes; they would endure, only the wild men were gone; indeed, tomorrow, and there would be grown men in Jefferson who could not even remember a drunken Indian in the jail; another tomorrow—so quick, so rapid, so fast—and not even a highwayman any more of the old true sanguinary girt and tradition of Hare and Mason and the mad Harpes; even Murrell, their thrice-compounded heir and apotheosis, who had taken his heritage of simple rapacity and bloodlust and converted it into a bloody dream of outlaw-empire, was gone, finished, as obsolete as Alexander, checkmated and stripped not even by man but by Progress, by a pierceless front of middle-class morality, which refused him even the dignity of execution as a felon, but instead merely branded him on the hand like an

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Elizabethan pickpocket—until all that remained of the old days for the jail to incarcerate was the runaway slave, for his little hour more, his little minute yet while the time, the land, the nation, the American earth, whirled faster and faster toward the plunging precipice of its destiny;

That fast, that rapid: a commodity in the land now which until now had dealt first in Indians: then in acres and sections and boundaries:—an economy: Cotton: a king: omnipotent and omnipresent: a destiny of which (obvious now) the plow and the axe had been merely the tools; not plow and axe which had effaced the wilderness, but Cotton: petty globules of Motion weightless and myriad even in the hand of a child, incapable even of wadding a rifle, let alone of charging it, yet potent enough to sever the very taproots of oak and hickory and gum, leaving the acre-shading tops to wither and vanish in one single season beneath that fierce minted glare; not the rifle nor the plow which drove at last the bear and deer and panther into the last jungle fastnesses of the river bottoms, but Cotton; not the soaring cupola of the courthouse drawing people into the country, but that same white tide sweeping them in: that tender skim covering the winter's brown earth, burgeoning through spring and summer into September's white surf crashing against the flanks of gin and warehouse and ringing like bells on the marble counters of the banks: altering not just the face of the land, but the complexion of the town too, creating its own parasitic aristocracy not only behind the columned porticoes of the plantation houses, but in the counting-rooms of merchants and bankers and the sanctums of lawyers, and not only these last, but finally nadir complete: the county offices too: of sheriff and tax-collector and bailiff and turnkey and clerk: doing overnight to the old jail what Sutpen's architect with all his brick and iron smithwork, had not been able to accomplish—the old jail which had been unavoidable, a necessity, like a public comfort-station, and which, like the public comfort-station, was not ignored but simply by mutual concord, not seen, not looked at, not named by its purpose and aim, yet which to the older people of the town, in spite of Sutpen's architect's face-lifting, was still the old jail—now translated into an integer, a moveable pawn on the county's political board like the sheriff's star or the

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clerk's bond or the bailiff's wand of office; converted indeed now, elevated (an apotheosis) ten feet above the level of the town, so that the old buried log walls now contained the living-quarters for the turnkey's family and the kitchen from which his wife catered, at so much a meal, to the city's and the county's prisoners—perquisite not for work or capability for work, but for political fidelity and the numerality of votable kin by blood or marriage—a jailor or turnkey, himself someone's cousin and with enough other cousins and inlaws of his own to have assured the election of sheriff or chancery- or circuit-clerk—a failed farmer who was not at all the victim of his time but, on the contrary, was its master, since his inherited and inescapable incapacity to support his family by his own efforts had matched him with an era and a land where government was founded on the working premise of being primarily an asylum for ineptitude and indigence, for the private business failures among your or your wife's kin whom otherwise you yourself would have to support—so much his destiny's master that, in a land and time where a man's survival depended not only on his ability to drive a straight furrow and to fell a tree without maiming or destroying himself, that fate had supplied to him one child: a frail anemic girl with narrow workless hands lacking even the strength to milk a cow, and then capped its own vanquishment and eternal subjugation by the paradox of giving him for his patronymic the designation of the vocation at which he was to fail: Farmer; this was the incumbent, the turnkey, the jailor; the old tough logs which had known Ikkemotubbe's drunken Chickasaws and brawling teamsters and trappers and flatboatmen (and—for that one short summer night—the four highwaymen, one of whom might have been the murderer, Wiley Harpe), were now the bower framing a window in which mused hour after hour and day and month and year, the frail blonde girl not only incapable of (or at least excused from) helping her mother cook, but even of drying the dishes after her mother (or father perhaps) washed them—musing, not even waiting for anyone or anything, as far as the town knew, not even pensive, as far as the town knew: just musing amid her blonde hair in the window facing the country town street, day after day and month after month and—as the town remembered it—year after year for what must have been three or four of them, inscribing at some moment the fragile and in-

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delible signature of her meditation in one of the panes of it (the window): her frail and workless name, scratched by a diamond ring in her frail and workless hand, and the date: *Cecilia Farmer April 16th 1861;*

At which moment the destiny of the land, the nation, the South, the State, the County, was already whirling into the plunge of its precipice, not that the State and the South knew it, because the first seconds of fall always seem like soar: a weightless deliberation preliminary to a rush not downward but upward, the falling body reversed during the second by transubstantiation into the upward rush of earth; a soar, an apex, the South's own apotheosis of its destiny and its pride, Mississippi and Yoknapatawpha County not last in this, Mississippi among the first of the eleven to ratify secession, the regiment of infantry which John Sartoris raised and organised with Jefferson for its headquarters, going to Virginia numbered Two in the roster of Mississippi regiments, the jail watching that too but just by cognizance from a block away: that noon, the regiment not even a regiment yet but merely a voluntary association of untried men who knew they were ignorant and hoped they were brave, the four sides of the Square lined with their fathers or grandfathers and their mothers and wives and sisters and sweethearts, the only uniform present yet that one in which Sartoris stood with his virgin sabre and his pristine colonel's braid on the courthouse balcony, bareheaded too while the Baptist minister prayed and the Richmond mustering officer swore the regiment in; and then (the regiment) gone; and now not only the jail but the town too hung without motion in a tideless backwash: the plunging body advanced far enough now into space as to have lost all sense of motion, weightless and immobile upon the light pressure of invisible air, gone now all diminishment of the precipice's lip, all increment of the vast increaseless earth: a town of old men and women and children and an occasional wounded soldier (John Sartoris himself, deposed from his colonelcy by a regimental election after Second Manassas, came home and oversaw the making and harvesting of a crop on his plantation before he got bored and gathered up a small gang of irregular cavalry and carried it up into Tennessee to join Forrest), static in *quo,* rumored, murmured of war only as from a great and in-

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credible dreamy distance, like far summer thunder; until the spring of '64, the once-vast fixed impalpable increaseless and threatless earth now one omnivorous roar of rock (a roar so vast and so spewing, flinging ahead of itself, like the spray above the maelstrom, the preliminary anesthetic of shock so that the agony of bone and flesh will not even be felt, as to contain and sweep along with it the beginning, the first ephemeral phase, of this story, permitting it to boil for an instant to the surface like a chip or a twig—a match-stick or a bubble, say, too weightless to give resistance for destruction to function against: in this case, a bubble, a minute globule which was its own impunity, since what it—the bubble—contained, having no part in rationality and being contemptuous of fact, was immune even to the rationality of rock)—a sudden battle centering around Colonel Sartoris's plantation house four miles to the north, the line of a creek held long enough for the main Confederate body to pass through Jefferson to a stronger line on the river heights south of the town, a rear-guard action of cavalry in the streets of the town itself (and this was the story, the beginning of it; all of it too, the town might have been justified in thinking, presuming they had had time to see, notice, remark and then remember, even that little)—the rattle and burst of pistols, the hooves, the dust, the rush and scurry of a handful of horsemen led by a lieutenant, up the street past the jail, and the two of them—the frail and useless girl musing in the blonde mist of her hair beside the window-pane where three or four (or whatever it was) years ago she had inscribed with her grandmother's diamond ring her paradoxical and significantless name (and where, so it seemed to the town, she had been standing ever since), and the soldier, gaunt and tattered, battle-grimed and fleeing and undefeated, looking at one another for that moment across the fury and pell mell of battle;

Then gone; that night the town was occupied by Federal troops; two nights later, it was on fire (the Square, the stores and shops and the professional offices), gutted (the courthouse too), the blackened jagged topless jumbles of brick wall enclosing like a ruined jaw the blackened shell of the courthouse between its two rows of topless columns, which (the columns) were only blackened and stained, being tougher than fire: but not the jail, it escaped, un-

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touched, insulated by its windless backwater from fire; and now the town was as though insulated by fire or perhaps cauterised by fire from fury and turmoil, the long roar of the rushing omnivorous rock fading on to the east with the fading uproar of the battle: and so in effect it was a whole year in advance of Appomattox (only the undefeated undefeatable women, vulnerable only to death, resisted, endured, irreconcilable); already, before there was a name for them (already their prototype before they even existed as a species), there were carpetbaggers in Jefferson—a Missourian named Redmond, a cotton- and quartermaster-supplies speculator, who had followed the Northern army to Memphis in '61 and (nobody knew exactly how or why) had been with (or at least on the fringe of) the military household of the brigadier commanding the force which occupied Jefferson, himself—Redmond—going no farther, stopping, staying, none knew the why for that either, why he elected Jefferson, chose that alien fire-gutted site (himself one, or at least the associate, of them who had set the match) to be his future home; and a German private, a blacksmith, a deserter from a Pennsylvania regiment, who appeared in the summer of '64, riding a mule, with (so the tale told later, when his family of daughters had become matriarchs and grandmothers of the town's new aristocracy) for saddle-blanket sheaf on sheaf of virgin and uncut United States banknotes, so Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County had mounted Golgotha and passed beyond Appomattox a full year in advance, with returned soldiers in the town, not only the wounded from the battle of Jefferson, but whole men: not only the furloughed from Forrest in Alabama and Johnston in Georgia and Lee in Virginia, but the stragglers, the unmaimed flotsam and refuse of that single battle now drawing its final constricting loop from the Atlantic Ocean at Old Point Comfort, to Richmond: to Chattanooga: to Atlanta: to the Atlantic Ocean again at Charleston, who were not deserters but who could not rejoin any still-intact Confederate unit for the reason that there were enemy armies between (so that in the almost faded twilight of that land, the knell of Appomattox made no sound; when in the spring and early summer of '65 the formally and officially paroled and disbanded soldiers began to trickle back into the county, there was anticlimax; they returned to a land which not only had passed through Appomattox over a year ago, it had that year in which to assimilate it,

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that whole year in which not only to ingest surrender but(begging the metaphor, the figure) to convert, metabolise it, and then defecate it as fertilizer for the four-years' fallow land they were already in train to rehabilitate a year before the Virginia knell rang the formal change, the men of '65 returning to find themselves alien in the very land they had been bred and born in and had fought for four years to defend, to find a working and already solvent economy based on the premise that it could get along without them: (and now the rest of this story, since it occurs, happens, here: not yet June in '65; this one had indeed wasted no time getting back: a stranger, alone; the town did not even know it had ever seen him before, because the other time was a year ago and had lasted only while he galloped through it firing a pistol backward at a Yankee army, and he had been riding a horse—a fine though a little too small and too delicate blooded mare—where now he rode a big mule, which for that reason—its size—was a better mule than the horse was a horse, but it was still a mule, and of course the town could not know that he had swapped the mare for the mule on the same day that he traded his lieutenant's sabre—he still had the pistol—for the stocking full of seed corn he had seen growing in a Pennsylvania field and had not let even the mule have one mouthful of it during the long journey across the ruined land between the Atlantic seaboard and the Jefferson jail, riding up to the jail at last, still gaunt and tattered and dirty and still undefeated and not fleeing now but instead making or at least planning a single-handed assault against what any rational man would have considered insurmountable odds ((but then, that bubble had ever been immune to the ephemerae of facts)); perhaps, probably—without doubt: apparently she had been standing leaning musing in it for three or four years in 1864; nothing had happened since, not in a land which had even anticipated Appomattox, capable of shaking a meditation that rooted, that durable, that veteran—the girl watched him get down and tie the mule to the fence, and perhaps while he walked from the fence to the door he even looked for a moment at her, though possibly, perhaps even probably, not, since she was not his immediate object now, he was not really concerned with her at the moment, because he had so little time, he had none, really: still to reach Alabama and the small hill farm which had been his father's and would now be

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his, if—no, when—he could get there, and it had not been ruined by four years of war and neglect, and even if the land was still plantable, even if he could start planting the stocking of corn tomorrow, he would be weeks and even months late; during that walk to the door and as he lifted his hand to knock on it, he must have thought with a kind of weary and indomitable outrage of how, already months late, he must still waste a day or maybe even two or three of them before he could load the girl onto the mule behind him and head at last for Alabama—this, at a time when of all things he would require patience and a clear head, trying for them ((courtesy too, which would be demanded now)), patient and urgent and polite, undefeated, trying to explain, in terms which they could understand or at least accept, his simple need and the urgency of it, to the mother and father whom he had never seen before and whom he never intended, or anyway anticipated, to see again, not that he had anything for or against them either: he simply intended to be too busy for the rest of his life, once they could get on the mule and start for home; not seeing the girl then, during the interview, not even asking to see her for a moment when the interview was over, because he had to get the license now and then find the preacher: so that the first word he ever spoke to her was a promise delivered through a stranger; it was probably not until they were on the mule —the frail useless hands whose only strength seemed to be that sufficient to fold the wedding license into the bosom of her dress and then cling to the belt around his waist—that he looked at her again or ((both of them)) had time to learn one another's middle name);

That was the story, the incident, ephemeral of an afternoon in late May, unrecorded by the town and the county because they had little time too: (the county and the town) had anticipated Appomattox and kept that lead, so that in effect Appomattox itself never overhauled them; it was the long pull of course, but they had—as they would realise later—that priceless, that unmatchable year; on New Year's Day, 1865, while the rest of the South sat staring at the northeastern horizon beyond which Richmond lay, like a family staring at the closed door to a sick-room, Yoknapatawpha County was already nine months gone in reconstruction; by New Year's '66, the gutted walls (the rain of two winters had washed them clean of

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the smoke and soot) of the Square had been temporarily roofed and were stores and shops and offices again, and they had begun to restore the courthouse: not temporary, this, but restored, exactly as it had been, between the two columned porticoes, one north and one south, which had been tougher than dynamite and fire, because it was the symbol: the County and the City: and they knew how, who had done it before; Colonel Sartoris was home now, and General Compson, the first Jason's son, and though a tragedy had happened to Sutpen and his pride—a failure not of his pride nor even of his own bones and flesh, but of the lesser bones and flesh which he had believed capable of supporting the edifice of his dream—they still had the old plans of his architect and even the architect's molds, and even more: money, (strangely, curiously) Redmond, the town's domesticated carpetbagger, symbol of a blind rapacity almost like a biological instinct, destined to cover the South like a migration of locusts; in the case of this man, arriving a full year before its time and now devoting no small portion of the fruit of his rapacity to restoring the very building the destruction of which had rung up the curtain for his appearance on the stage, had been the formal visa on his passport to pillage; and by New Year's of '76, this same Redmond with his money and Colonel Sartoris and General Compson had built a railroad from Jefferson north into Tennessee to connect with one from Memphis to the Atlantic Ocean; nor content there either, north and south: another ten years (Sartoris and Redmond and Compson quarreled, and Sartoris and Redmond bought—probably with Redmond's money—Compson's interest in the railroad, and the next year Sartoris and Redmond had quarreled and the year after that, because of simple physical fear, Redmond killed Sartoris from ambush on the Jefferson Square and fled, and at last even Sartoris's supporters—he had no friends: only enemies and frantic admirers— began to understand the result of that regimental election in the fall of '62) and the railroad was a part of that system covering the whole South and East like the veins in an oak leaf and itself mutually adjunctive to the other intricate systems covering the rest of the United States, so that you could get on a train in Jefferson now and, by changing and waiting a few times, go anywhere in North America;

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No more into the United States, but into the *rest* of the United States, because the long pull was over now; only the aging unvanquished women were unreconciled (irreconcilable, reversed and irrevocably reverted against the whole moving unanimity of panorama until, old unordered vacant pilings above a tide's flood, they themselves had an illusion of motion, facing irreconcilably backward toward the old lost battles, the old aborted cause, the old four ruined years whose very physical scars ten and twenty and twenty-five changes of season had annealed back into the earth; twenty-five and then thirty-five years; not only a century and an age, but a way of thinking died; the town itself wrote the epilogue and epitaph: 1900, on Confederate Decoration Day, Mrs. Virginia Depre, Colonel Sartoris's sister, twitched a lanyard and the spring-restive bunting collapsed and flowed, leaving the marble effigy—the stone infantryman on his stone pedestal on the exact spot where forty years ago the Richmond officer and the local Baptist minister had mustered in the Colonel's regiment, and the old men in the gray and braided coats (all officers now, none less in rank than captain) tottered into the sunlight and fired shotguns at the bland sky and raised their cracked quavering voices in the shrill hackle-lifting yelling which Lee and Jackson and Longstreet and the two Johnstons (and Grant and Sherman and Hooker and Pope and McClellan and Burnside too for the matter of that) had listened to amid the smoke and the din; epilogue and epitaph, because apparently neither the U.D.C. ladies who instigated and bought the monument, nor the architect who designed it nor the masons who erected it, had noticed that the marble eyes under the shading marble palm stared not toward the north and the enemy, but toward the south, toward (if anything) his own rear—looking perhaps, the wits said (could say now, with the old war thirty-five years past and you could even joke about it—except the women, the ladies, the unsurrendered, the irreconcilable, who even after another thirty-five years would still get up and stalk out of picture houses showing *Gone With the Wind*), for reinforcements; or perhaps not a combat soldier at all, but a provost marshal's man looking for deserters, or perhaps himself for a safe place to run to: because that old war was dead; the sons of those tottering old men in gray had already died in blue coats in Cuba, the macabre mementos and testimonials and shrines of the new war already

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usurping the earth before the blasts of blank shotgun shells and the weightless collapsing of bunting had unveiled the final ones to the old;

Not only a new century and a new way of thinking, but of acting and behaving too: now you could go to bed in a train in Jefferson and wake up tomorrow morning in New Orleans or Chicago; there were electric lights and running water in almost every house in town except the cabins of Negroes; and now the town bought and brought from a great distance a kind of gray crushed ballast-stone called macadam, and paved the entire street between the depot and the hotel, so that no more would the train-meeting hacks filled with drummers and lawyers and court-witnesses need to lurch and heave and strain through the winter mud-holes; every morning a wagon came to your very door with artificial ice and put it in your icebox on the back gallery for you, the children in rotational neighborhood gangs following it (the wagon), eating the fragments of ice which the Negro driver chipped off for them; and that summer a specially-built sprinkling-cart began to make the round of the streets each day; a new time, a new age: there were screens in windows now; people (white people) could actually sleep in summer night air, finding it harmless, uninimical: as though there had waked suddenly in man (or anyway in his womenfolks) a belief in his inalienable civil right to be free of dust and bugs;

Moving faster and faster: from the speed of two horses on either side of a polished tongue, to that of thirty then fifty then a hundred under a tin bonnet no bigger than a wash-tub: which from almost the first explosion, would have to be controlled by police; already in a back yard on the edge of town, an ex-blacksmith's-apprentice, a grease-covered man with the eyes of a visionary monk, was building a gasoline buggy, casting and boring his own cylinders and rods and cams, inventing his own coils and plugs and valves as he found he needed them, which would run, and did: crept popping and stinking out of the alley at the exact moment when the banker Bayard Sartoris, the Colonel's son, passed in his carriage: as a result of which, there is on the books of Jefferson today a law prohibiting the operation of any mechanically-propelled vehicle on the streets of the corporate town: who (the same banker Sartoris) died in one

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(such was progress, that fast, that rapid) lost from control on an icy road by his (the banker's) grandson, who had just returned from (such was progress) two years of service as a combat airman on the Western Front and now the camouflage paint is weathering slowly from a French point-seventy-five field piece squatting on one flank of the base of the Confederate monument, but even before it faded there was neon in the town and A.A.A. and C.C.C. in the county, and W.P.A. ("and XYZ and etc.," as "Uncle Pete" Gombault, a lean clean tobacco-chewing old man, incumbent of a political sinecure under the designation of United States marshal—an office held back in reconstruction times, when the State of Mississippi was a United States military district, by a Negro man who was still living in 1925—fire-maker, sweeper, janitor and furnace-attendant to five or six lawyers and doctors and one of the banks—and still known as "Mulberry" from the avocation which he had followed before and during and after his incumbency as marshal: peddling illicit whiskey in pint and half-pint bottles from a cache beneath the roots of a big mulberry tree behind the drugstore of his pre-1865 owner—put it) in both; W.P.A. and XYZ marking the town and the county as war itself had not: gone now were the last of the forest trees which had followed the shape of the Square, shading the unbroken second-storey balcony onto which the lawyers' and doctors' offices had opened, which shaded in its turn the fronts of the stores and the walkway beneath; and now was gone even the balcony itself with its wrought-iron balustrade on which in the long summer afternoons the lawyers would prop their feet to talk; and the continuous iron chain looping from wooden post to post along the circumference of the courthouse yard, for the farmers to hitch their teams to; and the public watering trough where they could water them, because gone was the last wagon to stand on the Square during the spring and summer and fall Saturdays and trading-days, and not only the Square but the streets leading into it were paved now, with fixed signs of interdiction and admonition applicable only to something capable of moving faster than thirty miles an hour; and now the last forest tree was gone from the courthouse yard too, replaced by formal synthetic shrubs contrived and schooled in

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Lionel Trilling

W. D. HOWELLS AND THE ROOTS OF MODERN TASTE*

Every now and then in the past few years we have heard about the revival of interest in the work of William Dean Howells that we might soon expect. And certainly, if this rumor were substantiated, there would be a notable propriety in the event. In the last two decades Henry James has become established as a great magnetic figure in our higher culture. In the same period Mark Twain has become as it were newly established—not indeed, like James, as a source and object of intellectual energy, but at least as a permanent focus of our admiring interest, as the representative of a mode of the American mind and temperament which we are happy to acknowledge. To say that Henry James and Mark Twain are opposite poles of our national character would be excessive, yet it is clear that they do suggest tendencies which are very far apart, so that there is always refreshment and enlightenment in thinking of them together. And when we do think of them together, diverse as they are, indifferent to each other as they mostly were, deeply suspicious of each other as they were whenever they did remember each other, we naturally have in mind the man who stood between them as the affectionate friend of both, the happy admirer of their disparate geniuses, who saw so early the fullness of their virtues which we now take for granted. It would make a pleasant symmetry of thought if we could now know that William Dean Howells has become the object of renewed admiration, that he was being regarded, like his two friends, as a large significant figure in our literature.

But the rumor of the revival is surely false. A certain number of people, but a very small number, do nowadays feel that they might find pleasure in Howells, their expectation being based, no doubt, on

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an analogy with Trollope. And the analogy is fair enough. Howells produced in the free Trollopian way, and with the same happy yielding of the rigorous artistic conscience in favor of the careless flow of life, although not in favor of the claims of a "good story"; and now and then, even in our exigent age, we are willing to find respite from the strict demands of conscious art, especially if we can do so without a great loss of other sanctions and integrities. Howells, it is thought, can give us the pleasures of our generic image of the Victorian novel. He was a man of principle without being a man of heroic moral intensity, and we expect of him that he will involve us in the enjoyment of moral activity through the medium of a lively awareness of manners, and that he will delight us by touching on high matters in the natural course of gossip.

This is a very attractive expectation and Howells does not really disappoint it. He is not Trollope's equal, but at his best he is in his own right a very engaging novelist. Whether or not he deserves a stronger adjective than this may for the moment be left open to question, but engaging he undoubtedly is. And yet I think that he cannot now engage us, that we cannot expect a revival of interest in him—his stock is probably quite as high in the market as it will go. The excellent omnibus volume of Howells which Professor Commager recently brought out was piously reviewed but it was not bought. And when, last year, I imagined that it might be useful to my students to have a notion of the cultural and social situation which Howells described and therefore spent a considerable time talking about his books, I received the first anonymous letter I have ever had from a student—it warned me that the lapse of taste shown by my excessive interest in a dull writer was causing a scandal in the cafeterias.

As an historical figure, Howells must of course always make a strong claim upon our attention. His boyhood and youth, to which he so often returned in memory in his pleasant autobiographical books, were spent in circumstances of which everyone must be aware who wishes to understand the course of American culture. Howells' induction into the intellectual life gives us one of the points from which we can measure what has happened to the humanistic idea in the modern world. If we want to know what was the estate of literature a hundred years ago, if we want to be made aware of how the

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nineteenth century, for all its development of science and technology, was still essentially a humanistic period, we have only to take Howells' account of the intellectual life of the Ohio towns in which he lived—the lively concern with the more dramatic aspects of European politics, the circulation of the great English reviews, the fond knowledge of the English and American literature of the century, the adoration of Shakespeare, the general, if naive respect for learning. It was certainly not elaborate, this culture of little towns that were almost of the frontier, and we must not exaggerate the extent to which its most highly developed parts were shared, yet it *was* pervasive and its assumptions were general enough to support Howells in his literary commitment. In a log cabin he read to the bottom of that famous barrel of books, he struggled to learn four or five languages, he determined on a life of literature, and his community encouraged his enterprise. And it is worth observing that, as he himself says, he devoted himself to literature not so much out of disinterested love for it as out of the sense that literature was an institutional activity by which he might make something of himself in the worldly way.

Howells' historical interest for us continues through all his developing career. His famous pilgrimage to New England, his round of visits to the great literary figures of Massachusetts, is a *locus classicus* of our literary history. It culminated, as everyone remembers, in that famous little dinner which Lowell gave for him at the Parker House; it was the first dinner that Howells had ever seen that was served in courses, in what was then called the Russian style, and it reached its significant climax when Holmes turned to Lowell and said, "Well, James, this is the apostolic succession, this is the laying on of hands." Much has been made of this story, and indeed much must be made of it, for although Holmes probably intended no more than an irony-lightened kindliness to a very young man, his remark was previsionary, and the visit of Howells does mark a succession and an era, the beginning of an American literature where before, as Howells said, there had been only a New England literature. And then Howells' uprooting himself from Boston to settle in New York in 1888 marks, as Mr. Kazin observes, the shifting of the concentrations of literary capital from the one city to the other.

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Howells' historical importance is further confirmed by the position he attained in the institutional life of American letters. Not long after Howells died, H. L. Mencken, who had been at pains to make his name a byword of evasive gentility, wrote to regret his death, because, as he said, with irony enough but with some seriousness, there was now no American writer who could serve as the representative of American letters, no figure who, by reason of age, length of service, bulk of work, and public respect, could stand as a literary patriarch. And since Mencken wrote, no such figure has arisen. Howells was indeed patriarchal as he grew older, large and most fatherly, and if he exercised his paternity only in the mild, puzzled American way, still he was the head of the family and took his responsibility seriously. He asserted the dignity of the worker in literature at the same time that he defined the writer's place as being economically and socially with the manual worker rather than with the business man. He was receptive to the new and the strange; his defense of Emily Dickinson, for example, does him great credit. His personal and cultural timidity about sexual matters made him speak harshly of writers more daring in such things than himself, yet he fought effectively for the acceptance of contemporary European literature, and he was tireless in helping even those of the young men who did not share his reticences. Edmund Wilson recently defined the literary character of Stephen Crane by differentiating him from "the comfortable family men of whom Howells was chief," yet Crane was in Howells' debt, as were Boyesen, Hamlin Garland, Norris and Herrick.

He was not a man of great moral intensity, but he was stubborn; his comportment in the Haymarket affair marks, I think, the beginning in our life of the problem of what came to be called the writer's "integrity," and his novel *A Hazard of New Fortunes* is probably the first treatment of the theme which became almost obsessive in our fiction in the 'thirties, the intellectual's risking his class position by opposing the prejudices of his class. He was most intelligently aware of what was happening in American life, and his discontent is almost the more cogent because it was only intermittently courageous. He is not like Henry Adams or Henry James, who thought of America in reference to their own grand ambitions. Howells' ambitiousness reached its peak in youth and then compro-

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mised itself, or democratized itself, so that in much of his work he is only the journeyman, a craftsman quite without the artist's expectably aristocratic notions, and in his life, although he was a child of light and a son of the covenant, he also kept up his connections with the Philistines—he was, we remember, the original of James's Strether; and when such a man complains about America, we do not discount, we do not resist, we listen and are convinced. His literary criticism still has force and point because it is so doggedly partisan with a certain kind of literature and because it always had a social end in view.

It is of course in his novels that Howells is at his best as a social witness, and he can be very good indeed. The reader who wants to test for himself what were in actual fact Howells' powers of social insight which have for so long been slighted in most accounts of them might best read *A Modern Instance,* and he would do well to read it alongside so perceptive a work of modern sociology as David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd,* for the two books address themselves to the same situation, a change in the American character, a debilitation of the American psychic tone, the loss of an adequate moral tension. Nothing could be more telling than Howells' description of the religious mood of the 'seventies and 'eighties, the movement from the last vestiges of faith to a genteel plausibility, the displacement of doctrine and moral strenuousness by a concern with social adjustment and the amelioration of boredom. And the chief figure of the novel, Bartley Hubbard, is worthy to stand with Dickens' Bradley Headstone, or James's Basil Ransom and Paul Muniment, or Flaubert's Sénécal, or Dostoevsky's Smerdyakov and Shigalov, as one of a class of fictional characters who envisage a large social actuality of the future. Howells has caught in Hubbard the quintessence of the average sensual man as the most sanguine of us have come to fear our culture breeds him, a man somewhat gifted—and how right a touch that Hubbard should be a writer of sorts, how deep in our democratic culture is the need to claim some special undeveloped gift of intellect or art!—a man trading upon sincerity and half-truth, vain yet self-doubting, aggressive yet self-pitying, self-indulgent yet with starts of conscience, friendly and helpful but not loyal, impelled to the tender relationships yet wishing above all to live to himself and by himself, essentially resenting all human ties.

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Yet if we praise Howells only as a man who is historically interesting, or only as an observer who testifies truthfully about the American social fact of his time, we may be dealing as generously and as piously with his memory as the nature of his achievements permits, but we cannot be happy over having added to the number of American writers who must be praised thus circumspectly if they are to be praised at all. We have all too many American writers who live for us only because they can be so neatly "placed," whose life in literature consists of their being influences or precursors, or of being symbols of intellectual tendencies, which is to say that their life is not in literature at all but in the history of culture.

Perhaps this is the fate to which we must abandon Howells. The analogy that is made between him and Trollope, while it suggests something of his quality, also suggests his limitations, which are considerable. As an American, and for reasons that Henry James made clear, he did not have Trollope's social advantages, he did not have that thickness of the English scene and of the English character which were of such inestimable value to the English novelists as a standing invitation to energy, gusto, and happy excess. Nor did he have Trollope's assumption of a society essentially settled despite the changes that might be appearing; his consciousness of the past could not be of sufficient weight to balance the pull of the future, and so his present could never be as solid as Trollope's. "Life here," as he said, "is still for the future—it is a land of Emersons—and I like a little present moment in mine." He never got as much present moment as the novelist presumably needs, and his novels are likely to seem to most readers to be of the past because nothing in America is quite so dead as an American future of a few decades back, unless it is an American personage of the same time.

And yet it is still possible that Howells deserves something better than a place in the mere background of American literature. It is clear enough that he is not of a kind with Hawthorne, Melville, James, and Whitman, nor of a kind with Emerson and Thoreau, nor with Poe, nor with Mark Twain at his best. Yet neither is he of a kind with H. B. Fuller and Robert Herrick, whose names are usually mentioned with his as being in a line of descent from him. If Howells is experienced not as he exists in the textbooks, but as he really is on his own page, we have to see that there is something in-

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domitable about him; at least while we are reading him he does not consent to being consigned to the half-life of the background of literature. For one thing, his wit and humor save him. Much must be granted to the man who created the wealthy, guilty, hypersensitive Clara Kingsbury, called her "a large blonde mass of suffering" and conceived that she might say to poor Marcia Hubbard, "Why, my child, you're a Roman matron!" and come away in agony that Marcia would think she meant her nose. And the man is not easily settled with who at eighty-three, in the year of his death, wrote that strange realistic romance, *The Vacation of the Kelwyns,* with its paraphernalia of gypsies and dancing bears and its infinitely touching impulse to speak out against the negation and repression of emotion, its passionate wish to speak out for the benign relaxation of the will. When we praise his social observation, we must see that it is of a precision and subtlety which carry it beyond sociology to literature; it is literature and not sociology to understand with Howells' innocent clarity the relationship of the American social classes, to know that a lady from Cambridge and the farmer's wife with whom she boards will have a natural antagonism which will be expressed in the great cultural issue of whether steak should be fried or broiled. Again, when we have said all that there is to say about Howells' theory of character, have taken full account of its lack of glory, we must see that in its reasoned neutrality, in its insistence on the virtual equality in any person of the good and the bad, or of the interesting and the dull, there is a kind of love, perhaps not so much of persons as of persons in society, of the social idea. At the heart of Herrick there is deadness and even a kind of malice; at the heart of Fuller there is a sort of moral inertness; but at the heart of Howells there is a loving wonder at what Burke called "the great mysterious incorporation of the human race."

I don't mean by this to define the whole quality and virtue of Howells but only to offer enough in his defense to make his case at least doubtful, because I want to ask how far our present friendly indifference to him is of his making and how far it is of ours. It is a question which no doubt cannot be fully answered at this time but only in some later generation that is as remote from our assumptions as from Howells', yet it is worth attempting for what small self-knowledge the effort might bring.

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Henry James's essay on Howells is well known, and in that essay there are three sentences which by implication define the ground of our present inhospitality to Howells. They have the advantage for our inquiry of appearing in the friendliest possible context, and they are intended not as judgments, certainly not as adverse judgments, but only as descriptions. This is the first statement: "He is animated by a love of the common, the immediate, the familiar, and the vulgar elements of life, and holds that in proportion as we move into the rare and strange we become vague and arbitrary; that truth of representation, in a word, can be achieved only so long as it is in our power to test and measure it." Here is the second statement: "He hates a 'story,' and (this private feat is not impossible) has probably made up his mind very definitely as to what the pestilent thing consists of. Mr. Howells hates an artificial fable, a denouement that is pressed into service; he likes things to occur as in life, where the manner of a great many of them is not to occur at all." And here is the third statement: "If American life is on the whole, as I make no doubt whatever, more innocent than that of any other country, nowhere is the fact more patent than in Mr. Howells' novels, which exhibit so constant a study of the actual and so small a perception of evil."

It will be immediately clear from these statements how far from our modern taste Howells is likely to be. I have said they are objective statements, that they are descriptions and not judgments, yet we can hear in them some ambiguity of tone—some ambiguity of tone must inevitably be there, for James is defining not only his friend's work but, by inversion, his own. And almost in the degree that we admire James and defend his artistic practice, we are committed to resist Howells. But I think we must have the grace to see that in resisting Howells, in rejecting him, we are resisting and rejecting something more than a literary talent or temperament or method. There is in Howells, as I have tried to suggest, an odd kind of muted, stubborn passion which we have to take account of, and respect, and recognize for what it is, the sign of a commitment, of an involvement in very great matters—we are required to see that in making our judgment of him we are involved in considerations of way of life, of quality of being.

His passion and its meaning become apparent whenever he

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speaks of the commonplace, which was the almost obsessive object of his literary faith. "The commonplace? Commonplace? The commonplace is just that light, impalpable, aërial essence which [the novelists] have never got into their confounded books yet. The novelist who could interpret the common feelings of commonplace people would have the answer to 'the riddle of the painful earth' on his tongue." We might go so far as to grant that the passion of this statement has a kind of intellectual illumination in it which commands our respect, but we in our time cannot truly respond to it. We are lovers of what James calls the rare and strange, and in our literature we are not responsive to the common, the immediate, the familiar, and the vulgar elements in life. Or at least we have a most complicated relation to these elements. In our poetic language we do want something that has affinity with the common, the immediate, the familiar, and the vulgar. And we want a certain aspect or degree of these elements in all our literature—we want them in their extremity, especially the common and vulgar. We find an interest in being threatened by them, we like them represented in their extremity to serve as a sort of outer limit of the possibility of our daily lives, as a kind of mundane hell. They figure for us in this way in *Ulysses,* in *The Waste Land,* in Kafka's novels and stories, even in Yeats, and they account, I believe, for the interest of comfortable middle-class readers in James Farrell's *Studs Lonigan.* In short, we consent to the commonplace as it verges upon and becomes the rare and strange. The commonplace of extreme poverty or ultimate boredom may even come to imply the demonic and be valued for that—let life be sufficiently depressing and sufficiently boring in its commonplaceness and we shall have been licensed to give up quiet desperation and to become desperately fierce. We are attracted by the idea of human life in, as it were, putrefaction, in stewing corruption —we sense the force gathering in the fermentation. But of course Howells' kind of commonness suggests nothing of this. The early objection made to his work was that it was drab and depressing, the point of comparison being fiction of plot and melodramatic incident, what Howells called the "romantic"; but after a time the objection was to his tame gentility, the comparison being then with Zola. Howells admired Zola enormously and fought for his recognition, but he eventually thought that Zola failed in realism and sur-

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rendered to "romanticism." He meant that the matter of Zola's realism would lead his readers away from the facts of their middle-class lives. For Howells the center of reality was the family life of the middle class.

The feeling for the family with which Howells' theory of the commonplace was bound up was very strong in him, and Mr. Wilson is accurate when he makes it definitive of Howells' quality. His family piety seems to have amounted almost to a superstitiousness, for as such we must interpret his having said to Mark Twain, "I would rather see and talk with you than with any other man in the world," and then adding "outside my own family." His sorrows were family sorrows; after his marriage the direction of his life was given chiefly by the family necessities. And it is a fact worth noting, and even more remarkable for what it tells us about American literature than for what it tells us about Howells himself, that he is the only nineteenth-century American writer of large reputation who deals directly and immediately with the family.

I do not know whether or not anyone has remarked the peculiar power the idea of the family has in literature—perhaps it has never been worth anyone's while to remark what is so simple and obvious, so easily to be observed from the time of the Greek epics and of the Greek drama down through the course of European literature. Even today, when our sense of family has become much attenuated, the familial theme shows its power in our most notable literature, in Joyce, in Proust, in Faulkner, in Kafka. But our present sense of the family is of the family in dissolution, and although of course the point of any family story has always been a threatened or an actual dissolution, this was once thought to be calamity where with us it is the natural course of things. We are sure that the nineteenth-century family was an elaborate hoax and against nature. It is true that almost every second-rate novel will represent one of its good characters expressing the hope of a quiet home and charming and satisfying children; it is true that the family is at the center of the essential mythology of our social and economic life, the good and sufficient reason for accumulation and expenditure, and that the maintenance of the family in peace is the study of our psychological science, yet in our literature the family serves as but an ideality, a

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rather wistful symbol of peace, order, and continuity, it does not exist in anything like actuality.

This may explain our feeling of indifference to the realism of the commonplace. But our attitude toward the family must be understood in a very large context, as but one aspect of our attitude to the idea of *the conditioned,* of the material circumstances in which spirit exists. From one point of view, no people has ever had so intense an idea of the relationship of spirit to its material circumstances as we in America now have. Our very preoccupation with *things,* as Mary McCarthy once observed, is really a way of dealing with the life of spirit in the world of matter—our possessions, although they have reference to status and comfort, have a larger reference to the future of our souls, to energy and the sense of cleanness and fitness and health; our materialism cannot be represented as the Roman *luxus* has been represented, its style does not imply ease and rest and self-indulgence but rather an ideal of alertness and readiness of spirit. And this sense of the conditioned is carried out in our elaborate theories of child-rearing, and the extravagant store we set by education; and in our theories of morality and its relation to social circumstance.

Yet it is to be seen that those conditions to which we do respond are the ones which we ourselves make or over which we have control, which is to say conditions as they are virtually spirit, as they deny the idea of *the conditioned.* Somewhere in our mental constitution is the demand for life as pure spirit. The idea of unconditioned spirit is of course a very old one, but we are probably the first people to think of it as a realizable possibility and to make that possibility part of our secret assumption. It is this that explains the phenomenon of our growing disenchantment with the whole idea of the political life, the feeling that although we are willing, nay eager, to live in society, for we all know that man fulfills himself in society, we do not willingly consent to live in a particular society of the present, marked as it is bound to be by a particular economic system, by disorderly struggles for influence, by mere approximations and downright failures. Our aesthetic sense—I mean our deep comprehensive aesthetic sense, really our metaphysics—which is satisfied by the performance of a Bendix washing machine, is revolted by such a politically conditioned society. The wide disrepute into which cap-

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italistic society has fallen all over the world is justified by the failures and injustices of capitalism; but if we want to understand the assumptions about politics of the world today, we have to consider the readiness of people to condemn the failures and injustices of that society as compared with their reluctance to condemn the failures and injustices of communist society. The comparison will give us the measure of the modern preference for the unconditioned—to the modern more-or-less thinking man, communist society is likely to seem a close approximation to the unconditioned, to spirit making its own terms.[1]

The dislike of the conditioned is in part what makes so many of us dissatisfied with our class situation, and guilty about it, and unwilling to believe that it has any reality, or that what reality it may have is a possible basis of moral or spiritual prestige (which is the most valuable thing in the world to those of us who think a little). By extension, we are very little satisfied with the idea of family life—for us it is part of the inadequate bourgeois reality. Not that we don't live goodnaturedly enough with our families, but when we do, we know that we are "family men," by definition cut off from the true realities of the spirit. This, I venture to suppose, is why the family is excluded from American literature of any pretensions. Although not all families are thus excluded—for example, the family of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* is very happily welcomed. And on every account it should be, but probably one reason for our eager acceptance of it is that we find in its extremity of suffering a respite from the commonplace of the conditioned as we know it in our families, we find in it an intimation of liberty—when conditions become extreme enough there is sometimes a sense of deep relief, as if the conditioned had now been left quite behind, as if spirit were freed when the confining comforts and the oppressive assurances of civil life are destroyed.

But Howells was committed totally and without question to civil life, and when he wrote an essay called "Problems of Existence in Fiction," although he did include among the existential matters that the novelist might treat such grim, ultimate things as a lingering

1. Our feeling about the conditioned may have its connection with our becoming, as C. Wright Mills puts it, less "property-minded" and more "commodity-minded."

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hopeless illness, it is but one item among such others as the family budget, nagging wives, daughters who want to marry fools, and the difficulties of deciding whom to invite to dinner. In extenuation of Howells we remember that this is all the matter of Jane Austen, the high reverberations of whose touch upon the commonplace we have habituated ourselves to hear. But Howells does not permit us to defend him with the comparison; he is profligate in his dealings with the ordinary, and in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* he does not think twice about devoting the first six chapters to an account of the hero's search for an apartment. I have heard that someone has written to explicate the place of these chapters in the total scheme of the novel, and in perfect ignorance of this essay I hazard the guess that its intention is to rescue Howells from the appearance of an excess of literalness and ordinariness, and that in the carrying out of this intention Basil March's fruitless ringing of janitors' bells is shown to be a modern instance of the age-old theme of The Quest, or an analogue of the Twelve Tribes in the Wilderness, or of the flight into Egypt, or a symbol of the homelessness of the intellectual. But it is really just a house-hunt. Of course any house-hunt will inevitably produce lost and unhappy feelings, even a sense of cosmic alienation—so much in our dull daily lives really does make a significant part of man's tragic career on earth, which is what Howells meant by his passionate sentence about the charm and power of the commonplace. But when we yield to our contemporary impulse to enlarge all experience, to involve it as soon as possible in history, myth, and the oneness of spirit—an impulse with which, I ought to say, I have considerable sympathy—we are in danger of making experience merely typical, formal, and *representative,* and thus of losing one term of the dialectic that goes on between spirit and the conditioned, which is, I suppose, what we mean when we speak of man's tragic fate. We lose, that is to say, the actuality of the conditioned, the literality of matter, the peculiar authenticity and authority of the merely denotative.[2] To lose this is to lose not a material fact but a spiritual one, for it is a fact of spirit that it must exist in a world which requires it to engage in so dispiriting an occupation as

2. Students have a trick of speaking of money in Dostoevsky's novels as "symbolic," as if no one ever needed, or spent, or gambled, or squandered the stuff—and as if to think of it as an actuality were sub-literary.

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hunting for a house. This knowledge—it is Donne's, it is Pascal's, it is Tolstoy's—may in literature be a cause of great delight because it is so rare and difficult; beside it the knowledge of pure spirit is comparatively easy.

To James's first statement about Howells, his second is clearly a corollary—"He hates a story." We cannot nowadays be sure that all of our reading public loves a story in the way James did. Quite simple readers can be counted on to love a story, but there is a large, consciously intelligent middle part of our reading public that is inclined to suspect a story, in James's sense, as a little dishonest. However, where theory of a certain complexity prevails, the implications of story, and even of "artificial fable," are nowadays easily understood. In these uplands of taste we comprehend that artificial devices, such as manipulated plot, are a way not of escaping from reality but of representing it, and we speak with vivacity of "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." Indeed, we have come to believe that the toad is the less real when the garden is also real. Our metaphysical habits lead us to feel the deficiency of what we call literal reality and to prefer what we call essential reality. To be sure, when we speak of literal reality, we are aware that there is really no such thing, that everything that is perceived is in some sense conceived, or created, that it is controlled by intention and indicates intention, and so on. Nevertheless, bound as we are by society and convention, if not by certain necessities of the mind, there still is a thing that we persist in calling "literal reality," and we recognize a greater or less approximation to it. Having admitted its existence, we give it a low status in our judgment of art. Naturalism, which is the form of art which makes its effects by the accumulation of the details of literal reality, is now in poor repute among us. We dismiss it as an analogue of an outmoded science and look to contemporary science to give authority to our preference for the abstract and conceptual, or we look to music to justify our impatience with the representational, and we derive a kind of political satisfaction from our taste, remembering that reactionary governments hate what we admire.

Our metaphysical and aesthetic prejudices even conspire to

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make us believe that our children have chiefly an "essential" sense of reality. We characterize the whole bent of their minds by their flights of fancy and by the extremity of distortion in their school paintings, preferring to forget that if they are in some degree on some occasions essential-realists, they are also passionately pedantic literalists, as they must be when their whole souls are so directed toward accommodation and control. The vogue of the "educational" toy with its merely essential representation is an adult vogue; the two-year-old wants the miniature Chevrolet with as many precise details as possible; it is not the gay chintz ball designed for the infant eye and grasp that delights him but rather the apple or the orange—its function, its use, its being valued by the family, give him his pleasure; and as he grows older his pedantry of literalism will increase, and he will scorn the adult world for the metaphysical vagaries of its absurd conduct—until he himself is seduced by them.

Now we must admit that Howells' extravagance of literalism, his hatred of a story, was on the whole not very intelligent. He said of Zola that "the imperfection of his realism began with the perfection of his form." That is, just where Zola appeals to us, just where he disregards his own syllabus of the experimental novel to introduce dramatic extravagance, he is disappointing to Howells. And Howells, in his character of programmatic literalist, spoke disrespectfully of Scott (one of the founders of realism), of Dickens, and of Balzac, saying that the truth was not in them; and he went so far as to express impatience with the romancing of George Eliot despite the clear affinity his realism has with hers. It is difficult to know what he made of his adored Jane Austen. Clearly it never occurred to him, as he sought to learn from her, that some of her finest effects are due to her carefully contrived stories. We, of course, find it natural to say that the perfection of her realism begins with the perfection of her form.

It is perhaps concomitant with our preference in our literature for an expeditious movement toward spirit that we have of late years been so preoccupied with artifice and form. We strongly feel that the shape which the mind gives to what the mind observes is more ideally characteristic of the mind than the act of observation. Possibly it is, and if the last decades of criticism have insisted rather

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too much that this is so,[3] it is possible that a view of our historical situation might lead us to justify the overemphasis, for in the historical perspective we perceive such a depressing plethora of matter and so little form. Form suggests a principle of control—I can quite understand that group of my students who have become excited over their discovery of the old animosity which Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams bear to the iamb, and have come to feel that could they but break the iambic shackles, the whole of modern culture could find a true expression.

The value of form must never be denigrated. But by a perversity of our minds, just as the commitment to a particular matter of literature is likely to be conceived in terms of hostility to form, so the devotion to the power of form is likely to be conceived in terms of hostility to matter, to matter in its sheer literalness, in its stubborn denotativeness. The claims of form to pre-eminence always have a certain advantage because of the feeling I have just referred to, that the mind's power of shaping is more characteristic of mind than its power of observation. Certainly the power of shaping is more intimately connected with what Plato called the "spirited" part of man, with the will, while observation may be thought of as springing from the merely "vegetative" part. The eye, it cannot choose but see, we cannot bid the ear be still; things impress themselves upon us against or with our will. But the plastic stress of spirit is of the will in the sense that it strives against resistance, against the stubbornness of the dull, dense world—it compels "all new successions to the forms they wear." Shelley's description of the act of creation suggests that the plastic will does not exercise itself without the recalcitrance of stupid literal matter. When we consider what is going on in painting at this moment, we perceive what may happen in an art when it frees itself entirely from the objective. No doubt the defense of the legitimacy of non-objective art which is made by referring to the right of music to be unindentured to an objective reality is as convincing as it ever was. Yet do we not have the unhappy sense that sterility is overtaking the painters, that by totally

3. Who can imagine any of our critics saying with Ruskin that "No good work whatever can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art," and " . . . no great man ever stops working till he has reached his point of failure. . . ."?

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freeing themselves from the objective reality which they believed extraneous to their art, they have provided the plastic will with no resisting object, or none except itself as expressed by other painters, and are therefore beginning to express themselves in mere competitive ingenuity? It is no accident of the *Zeitgeist* that Cubism is the classic painting of our time. The Cubists, bold as they were, accepted the conditioned, and kept in touch with a world of literality. And this is the opinion of one of the greatest of the Cubists, Juan Gris. "Those who believe in abstract painting," he wrote in a letter of 1919, "are like weavers who think they can produce material with only one set of threads and forget that there has to be another set to hold these together. Where there is no attempt at plasticity how can you control representational liberties? And where there is no concern for reality how can you limit and unite plastic liberties?"

What is true of the Cubists is also true of the great classic writers of our time—the sense of *things* is stronger in them than in their expositors, they grew in naturalism, in literalism, and they in their way insist on it as much as Flaubert, or the Goncourts, or Zola. The impulse of succeeding writers to build on Joyce is pretty sure to be frustrated, for it is all too likely to be an attempt to build on Joyce's notions of form, which have force only in relation to Joyce's superb sense of literal fact, his solid, simple awareness that in the work of art some things are merely denotative and do not connote more than appears, that they are *data* and must be permitted to exist as *data.*

The last of James's statements about Howells concerns his indifference to evil. For us today this constitutes a very severe indictment. We are all aware of evil; we began to be aware of it in certain quasi-religious senses a couple of decades or so ago; and as time passed we learned a great deal about the physical, political actuality of evil, saw it expressed in the political life in a kind of gratuitous devilishness which has always been in the world but which never before in Western Europe had been organized and, as it were, rationalized. A proper sense of evil is surely an attribute of a great writer, and nowadays we have been drawn to make it almost a touchstone of greatness, drawn to do so in part by our revived religious feelings or nostalgia for religious feelings, in part

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by our desire that literature should be in accord with reality as we now know it.

Our responsiveness to the idea of evil is legitimate enough, yet we ought to be aware that the management of the sense of evil is not an easy thing. Be careful, Nietzsche said, when you fight dragons, lest you become a dragon yourself. There is always the danger that when we have insisted with a certain intensity upon the fact of evil, we will go on to cherish the virtue of our insistence, and then the fact we insist upon. I would make a distinction between the relation to evil of the creator of the literary work and that of the reader, believing that the active confrontation of the fact of evil is likelier to be healthy than is the passive—there is something suspect in making evil the object of, as it were, aesthetic contemplation. But not even the creator is nowadays immune from all danger. Consider that the awareness of evil is held by us to confer a certain kind of spiritual status and prestige upon the person who exercises it, a status and prestige which are often quite out of proportion to his general spiritual gifts. On another occasion[4] I remarked upon the feeling of our time for what the sociologists call *charisma,* which, in the socio-political context, is the quality of power and leadership that seems to derive from a direct connection with great supernal forces, with godhead. This power we respond to when we find it in our literature in the form of alliances with the dark gods of sexuality, or the huge inscrutability of nature, or the church, or history; presumably we want it for ourselves. This is what accounts in our theory of literature for our preference for the hidden and ambiguous, for our demand for tension and tragedy—what Richard Chase called the hyperaesthesia of the modern mind, "its feeling that no thought is permissible except an extreme thought; that every idea must be directly emblematic of concentration camps, alienation, madness, hell, history, and God; that every word must bristle and explode with the magic potency of our plight." And Hannah Arendt, in her recent book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* speaking of the modern disintegration, remarks that with us today "to yield to the mere process of disintegration has become an irresistible temptation, not only be-

4. In an essay, "Wordsworth and The Iron Time," in *Wordsworth,* edited by Gilbert Dunklin, Princeton University Press, and, previously, in *The Kenyon Review,* Summer 1950.

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cause it has assumed the spurious grandeur of 'historical necessity' but also because everything outside it has begun to appear lifeless, bloodless, meaningless, and unreal"—disintegration itself fascinates us because it is a power, just as evil has always fascinated men, not only because it is opposed to good but also because it is, in its own right, a power.

Lifeless, bloodless, meaningless, and *unreal*—without stopping to estimate just how much life, blood, meaning, and reality Howells actually has, we must observe that the modern reader who judges him to have little is not exactly in a position to be objective, that he is likely to deal with Howells under the aspect of a universal judgment in which he says that very little in life has life, blood, meaning, and reality. The sentence in which Howells invites American novelists to concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life as being the more American is well known and has done much harm to his reputation. Possibly the sentence is more ambiguous than is generally supposed, for when Howells says "we invite," it is not clear whether "we" is the editorial pronoun or is meant to stand for the American people; and taking the sentence even in its worst construction, we ought to recall that it appeared in an essay on Dostoevsky in which Howells urges the reading of Dostoevsky, that when he speaks of the more smiling aspects of life as being the more American it is in the course of a comparison of America with the Russia of Dostoevsky, that he is careful to remark that America is not exempt from the sorrows of the natural course of life, only from those which are peculiar to the poverty and oppression of Dostoevsky's land, and that he is not sure that America is in every way the gainer by being so thoroughly in material luck. But let us leave all extenuation aside and take the sentence only as it has established itself in the legendary way, as the clear sign of Howells' blindness to evil, his ignorance of the very essence of reality. Taken so, it perhaps cannot be thought a very wise statement, but our interpretation of it, the vehemence with which we are likely to press its meaning, tells us, I think, more about ourselves than about Howells. It raises the question of why we believe, as we do believe, that evil is of the very essence of reality.

The management of the sense of evil, I have said, is not easy. The sense of evil is properly managed only when it is not allowed to be preponderant over the sense of self. The reason why Shakespeare

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holds his place in our imagination is that in him the sense of evil and the sense of self are in so delicate and continuous a reciprocation. And the ground of Keats's greatness, I have come to feel, is that Keats, perhaps uniquely in the last hundred years, maintained a precarious reciprocation of self and evil similar to Shakespeare's. He did this in a more conscious way than Shakespeare found necessary, and called to his aid in the affirmation of self against the knowledge of evil his intense imagination of pleasure—of pleasure of all kinds, the simplest and most primitive, such as eating and drinking, as well as the highest—and he boldly put pleasure, even contentment, at the center of his theory of poetry, and spoke of poetry telling heart-easing things. It is just for this reason that some readers denigrate him; they quite miss the intensity of his sense of reality, for where they make a duality of the principle of pleasure and the principle of reality, Keats made a unity—for him pleasure was a reality; it was, as Wordsworth had taught him, the grand principle of life, of mind, and of self. And it was this commitment to pleasure that made it possible for him to write the greatest exposition of the meaning of tragedy in our literature.

When we are so eager to say how wrong Howells was to invite the novelist to deal with the smiling aspects of life, we have to ask ourselves whether our quick antagonism to this mild recognition of pleasure does not imply an impatience with the self, a degree of yielding to what Miss Arendt calls the irresistible temptation of disintegration, of identification by submission to the grandeur of historical necessity which is so much more powerful than the self. It is possible that our easily expressed contempt for the smiling aspects and our covert impulse to yield to the historical process are a way of acquiring *charisma*. It is that peculiar *charisma* which has always been inherent in death. It was neither a genteel novelist nor a romantic poet who most recently defended the necessity of the smiling aspects and the heart-easing things—Dr. Bruno Bettelheim was first known in this country for his study, made at first hand, of the psychology of the inmates of the German concentration camps. Dr. Bettelheim recently found occasion to remark that "a fight for the very survival of civilized mankind is actually a fight to restore man to a sensitivity toward the joys of life. Only in this way can man be liberated and the survival of civilized mankind be assured. Maybe

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a time has come in which our main efforts need no longer be directed toward modifying the pleasure principle. [Dr. Bettelheim is speaking of the practice of psychoanalysis.] Maybe it is time we became concerned with restoring pleasure gratification to its dominant role in the reality principle; maybe this society needs less a modification of the pleasure principle by reality, and more assertion of the pleasure principle against an overpowering pleasure-denying reality." It cannot be said of Howells' smiling aspects that they represent a very intense kind of pleasure; yet for most men they will at least serve, in Keats's phrase, to bind us to the earth, to prevent our being seduced by the godhead of disintegration.

"Your really beautiful time will come," wrote Henry James to Howells on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday—what James characteristically meant was the time when the critical intelligence would begin to render Howells its tribute. The really beautiful time has come to James, but it has not yet come to Howells, and probably it will be a very long time coming. We are not easy with the quiet men, the civil personalities—the very word *civil,* except as applied to *disobedience* or *disorders* is uncomfortable in our ears. "Art inhabits temperate regions," said André Gide in 1940. Well, not always; but if the statement is perhaps a little inaccurate in the range of its generality, we can understand what led Gide to make it, for he goes on: "And doubtless the greatest harm this war is doing to culture is to create a profusion of extreme passions which, by a sort of inflation, brings about a devaluation of all moderate sentiments." And the devaluation of the moderate sentiments brings a concomitant devaluation of the extreme passions: "The dying anguish of Roland or the distress of a Lear stripped of power moves us by its exceptional quality but loses its special eloquence when reproduced simultaneously in several thousand copies." The extreme has become the commonplace of our day. This is not a situation which can be legislated or criticized out of existence, but while it endures we are not in a position to make a proper judgment of Howells, a man of moderate sentiments. It is a disqualification that we cannot regard with complacency, for if Gide is right, it implies that we are in a fair way of being disqualified from making any literary judgments at all.

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Roy Marz

TWELFTH STREET

The swan bathes in the rose alpenglow
And the chestnut trees bloom at the Golden Fly;
The band on the esplanade plays Gounod
And snow is on the peak through the hot July . . .
He who majored in urns under Keats and Yeats
Leaves the resonant image to face the street:

Mind, you are given to yesterday's rat and ham-hock,
The coward sun, the inert clutter and huddle
Of auto parts and pets, the damp look
Of women come from mass, the familiar mutter
Of old men who could not sleep, and the children
Sleep-stung who stand in the fog and sharpen.

Here on my street I am numbered and want it so,
Here on my image named and free to toss
Delicate bread to the rose swan, but I know
The length of the stiff rat I step across
And why stunned music of gong and hammer
Is in me deeper than reach of song.

Barbara Guest

PEOPLE IN WARTIME

Attilio, the minor Hun,
Rose with the sun.
Washed his face
In a little grape
And cried, This is I.

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This is one who would
Conquer
The fever
And the world outside.

With this he took a stride
Across his hall bedroom,
Faced the broken glass
And into the mirror sighed,
Such was I.

Now am I to become
This singular juxtaposition
Between the man
And his decision
Am I history, or am I a plot?

Or such was his reflexion
For
He was not interested
In
Art
Or politics
Or women
Or even getting ahead,

I have said
He was a minor character

And his misery
Was not Alpine,
But extremely particular,
Was he history, or was he not?

THIS WAY TO PITY

On the way to your house
I was followed by a bear, a rhinoceros,
And a pigeon. All of them yellow

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Like the throat of a clown, or the wrist
Of an Angel. The experience
Was immediate and illuminated.
At your street they suddenly left me
And I felt my heart running,
Dissolving as if a child
Were crying inside, crying all through,
A darkling with desire turning
Into lions and yellow-colored zoos.

May Swenson

SKETCH FOR A LANDSCAPE

a clearing her forehead Brisk
wilderness of hair
retreats from the smooth dancing ground
now savage drums are silent In caves
of shade twin jaguars couch
flicking their tails in restless dream Awake
they leap in unison Asleep they sink
like embers Sloping swards her cheekbones
graduate to a natural throne Two lambs
her nostrils curled back to back Follow
the shallow hollow to her lip-points
stung blossoms or bruised fruits Her
lower lip an opulent orchard Her spiral smile
a sweet oasis both hot and cool

soft in center swollen a bole of moss
hiding white stones and a moist spring
where lives a snake so beautiful and shy His
undulant hole is kept a slippery secret A cleft
between the cliff-edge and her mouth we drop
to the shouldered foothills down the neck's
obelisk and rest In the valley's scoop
velvet meadowland

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Czeslaw Milosz*

MURTI–BING

It was only toward the middle of the twentieth century that the inhabitants of many European countries came, in general unpleasantly, to the realization that their fate could be influenced directly by intricate and abstruse books on philosophy. Their bread, their work, their private lives began to depend on this or that decision in disputes on principles to which, until then, they had never paid any attention. In their eyes, the philosopher had always been a sort of dreamer whose divagations had no effect on reality. The average human being, even if he had once been exposed to it, wrote philosophy off as utterly impractical and useless. Therefore the great intellectual work of the Marxists could easily pass as just one more variation on a sterile pastime. Only a few individuals understood the meaning, causes and probable results of this general indifference.

A curious book appeared in Warsaw in 1932. It was a novel, in two volumes, entitled *Insatiability*. Its auther was Stefan Ignacy Witkiewicz, a painter, writer and philosopher, who had constructed an ontological system akin to the monadology of Leibniz. His book, like his earlier novel, *Farewell to Autumn,* could not hope for a large number of readers. The language used by the author was difficult, full of his own neologisms. Brutal descriptions of erotic scenes alternated with whole pages of discussions on Husserl, Carnap and other contemporary ontologists. Besides, one could not always tell whether

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the author was serious or joking; and the subject matter seemed to be pure fantasy.

The action of the book took place in Europe, more precisely in Poland, at some time in the near future or even in the present, that is, in the 'thirties, 'forties or 'fifties. The social group it portrayed was that of musicians, painters, philosophers, aristocrats and higher-ranking military officers. The whole book was nothing but a study of decay: mad, dissonant music; erotic perversion; widespread use of narcotics; dispossessed thinking; false conversion to Catholicism; and complex psychopathic personalities. This decadence reigned at a time when Western civilization was said to be threatened by an army from the East, a Sino-Mongolian army that dominated all the territory stretching from the Pacific to the Baltic.

Witkiewicz's heroes are unhappy in that they have no faith and no sense of meaning in their work. This atmosphere of decay and senselessness extends throughout the entire country. And at that moment, a great number of hawkers appear in the cities peddling Murti-Bing pills. Murti-Bing was a Mongolian philosopher who had succeeded in producing an organic means of transporting a "philosophy of life." This Murti-Bing "philosophy of life," which constituted the strength of the Sino-Mongolian army, was contained in pills in an extremely condensed form. A man who used these pills changed completely. He became serene and happy. The problems he had struggled with until then suddenly appeared to be superficial and worthless. He smiled indulgently at those who continued to concern themselves with such problems. Most affected, were all questions pertaining to unsolvable ontological difficulties. A man who swallowed Murti-Bing pills became impervious to any metaphysical concerns. He treated wild excesses of art, arising out of an "insatiety of form," as outmoded stupidities. He no longer considered the approach of the Sino-Mongolian army as a tragedy for his own civilization. He lived in the midst of his countrymen like a healthy individual surrounded by madmen. More and more people took the Murti-Bing cure, and their resultant calm contrasted sharply with the nervousness of their environment.

The epilogue, in a few words: the outbreak of the war led to a meeting of the armies of the West with those of the East. In the decisive moment, just before the great battle, the leader of the West-

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ern army surrendered to the enemy; and in exchange, though with the greatest honors, he was beheaded. The Eastern army occupied the country and the new life, that of Murti-Bing realized, began. The heroes of the novel, once tormented by philosophical "insatiety," now came to the service of the new society. Instead of writing the dissonant music of former days, they composed marches and odes. Instead of painting abstractions, as before, they turned out socially useful pictures. But since they could not rid themselves completely of their former personalities, they became outstanding cases of schizophrenia.

So much for the novel. Its author often expressed his belief that religion, philosophy and art are living out their last days. Yet he found life without them worthless. On September 17, 1939, learning that the Red Army had crossed the eastern border of Poland, he committed suicide by taking veronal and cutting his wrists.

Today, Witkiewicz's vision is being fulfilled in the minutest detail throughout a large part of the European continent. Perhaps sunlight, the smell of the earth, little everyday pleasures, and the forgetfulness that work brings can ease somewhat the tensions created by this process of fulfillment. But beneath the activity and bustle of daily life is the constant awareness of an irrevocable choice to be made. One must either die (physically or spiritually), or else one must be reborn according to a prescribed method, namely, the taking of Murti-Bing pills. People in the West are often inclined to consider the lot of converted countries in terms of might and coercion. That is wrong. There is an internal longing for harmony and happiness that lies deeper than ordinary fear or the desire to shield one's self against misery or physical destruction. The fate of completely logical, non-dialectical people like Witkiewicz is a warning for many an intellectual. All about him, he sees the frightening example of internal exiles, irreconcilable, non-participating, eroded by hatred. In order to understand the situation of a writer in a "popular democracy," one must seek the reasons for his activity and ask how he maintains his equilibrium. Whatever one may say, the New Faith affords great possibilities for an active and positive life. And Murti-Bing is more tempting to an intellectual than to a peasant or laborer. For the intellectual, the New Faith is a candle that he circles like a moth, eventually to be consumed by its flame.

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Blood flowed freely in Europe during the religious wars; and he who joins the New Faith today is paying off the debt of that European tradition. We are concerned here with more significant questions than mere force.

I shall try to speak of the profound longings in a man as if one really could analyze the essence of his blood and flesh. If I should try to describe the reasons why a man becomes a revolutionary I would be neither eloquent enough nor restrained enough. I admit that I have too much admiration for those who fight evil, whether their choice of ends and means be right or wrong. I draw the line, however, at those intellectuals who *adapt* themselves, although the fact that they are adapted and not genuine revolutionaries in no way diminishes their newly acquired zeal and enthusiasm.

There are, I believe, a few key concepts which may lead us to understand why men accept Murti-Bing.

The society portrayed by Witkiewicz is distinguished by the fact that religion has ceased to exist as a force. Religion long ago lost its hold on men's minds not only in the popular democracies, but elsewhere as well. As long as a society's best minds were occupied by theological questions, it was possible to speak of a given religion as the way of thinking of the whole social organism. All the matters which most actively concerned the people were referred to it and discussed in its terms. But that belongs to a dying era. We have come by easy stages to a lack of a uniform system of thought that could unite the peasant ploughing his field, the student poring over his books, and the mechanic working on an assembly line. Out of this lack arises the painful sense of detachment or abstraction that oppresses those who are the "creators of culture." Religion has been replaced by philosophy, which, however, has strayed into spheres increasingly less accessible to the layman. The discussions of Witkiewicz's heroes about Husserl can scarcely interest a reader of even better than average education; whereas the peasants remained bound to the Church, but only emotionally and traditionally. Music, painting and poetry have become something completely foreign to the great majority of people. To bridge the gap between art and the masses a theory developed that art should become a substitute for religion. "Metaphysical feelings" were to be expressed in the

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"compression of pure form"; and so form soon came to dominate content.

The great longing of the "alienated" intellectual is to belong to the masses. It is such a powerful longing that, in trying to appease it, a great many of them who once looked to Germany or Italy for inspiration have now become converted to the New Faith. Actually, the rightist totalitarian program was exceptionally poor. The only gratification it offered came from collective *warmth*: crowds, red faces, shouting, marches, arms outstretched in salute. It was difficult, however, to find rational satisfactions. Neither racist doctrines nor hatred of other nations, nor the glorification of one's own national traditions could efface the feeling that the entire program was improvised to deal with problems of the moment. But Murti-Bing is different. It lays scientific foundations. At the same time, it scraps all vestiges of the past: post-Kantian philosophy, fallen into disrepute because of its remoteness from reality; art designed for those who, having no religion, dare not admit that to seek the "absolute" through a juxtaposition of colors and sounds is cowardly and inconclusive thinking; and the semi-magic, semi-religious mentality of the peasants. All these are replaced by a *single* system, a single language of ideas. The truck driver and elevator operator employed by a publishing firm read the same Marxist classics as its director or staff writers. A day laborer and an historian can reach an understanding on this basis of common reading. Obviously, the difference that may exist between them in mental level is no smaller than that which separated a theologian from a village blacksmith in the Middle Ages. But fundamental principles are universal; the great spiritual schism has been obliterated. Dialectical materialism has united everyone; and philosophy (that is, dialectics) once more determines the patterns of life. It is beginning to be regarded with a respect that one has only for a force on which one's food, happiness and safety depend. The intellectual has once more become *useful*. He, who once devoted himself to his thinking and writing in his free moments away from a paying job in a bank or post office, has now found his rightful place on earth. He has been restored to society. Whereas, the businessmen, aristocrats and tradespeople who once considered him a harmless blunderer have now been dispossessed. They are indeed delighted to find work

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as cloak-room attendants and to hold the coat of a former employee of whom they said, in pre-war days, "It seems he writes." We must not oversimplify, however, the gratifications of personal ambition; they are merely the outward and visible signs of social necessity, symbols of a recognition that strengthens the intellectual's feeling of *belonging*.

Even though one seldom speaks about metaphysical motives that can lead to a complete change of one's political opinions, such motives do exist and can be observed in some of the most eminent, most intelligent, and most neurotic people. Let us imagine a spring day in a city situated in some country similar to that described in Witkiewicz's novel. One of his heroes is taking a walk. He is tormented by what we may call the *suction of the absurd*. What is the significance of the lives of the people he passes, of the senseless bustle, the laughter, the pursuit of money, the stupid animal diversions? By using a little intelligence he can easily classify the passers-by according to type; he can guess their social status, their habits and their preoccupations. A fleeting moment reveals their childhood, manhood and old age; and then they vanish. A purely physiological study of one particular passer-by in preference to another is meaningless. Yet if one penetrates into the minds of these people, one discovers utter nonsense. They are totally unaware of the fact that nothing is their own, that everything is part of their historical formation; their occupations, their clothes, their gestures and expressions, their beliefs and ideas. They are the force of inertia personified, victims of the delusion that each individual exists as a self. If at least these were souls, as the Church taught, or the monads of Leibniz! But these beliefs have perished. What remains is an aversion to the domination of the detail, to the mentality that *isolates* every phenomenon, such as eating, drinking, dressing, earning money, fornicating. And what is there beyond these things? Should such a state of affairs continue? Why should it continue? Such questions are almost synonymous with what is known as hatred of the bourgeoisie.

Let a new man arise, one who, instead of submitting to the world, will transform it. Let him create his own historical formation, instead of yielding to its bondage. Only thus can he redeem the absurdity of his physiological existence. Man must be made

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to understand this, by force and by suffering. Why shouldn't he suffer? He ought to suffer. Why can't he be used as manure, as long as he remains evil and stupid? If the intellectual must know the agony of thought, why should he spare others this pain? Why should he shield those who until now drank, guffawed, gorged themselves, cracked inane jokes and found life beautiful?

The intellectual's eyes twinkle with delight at the persecution of the bourgeois, and of the bourgeois mentality. It is a rich reward for the degradation he felt when he had to be part of the middle class, and when there seemed to be no way out of its cycle of birth and death. Now he has moments of sheer intoxication when he sees the intelligentsia, unaccustomed to rigorously tough thinking, caught in the snare of the revolution. The peasants, burying hoarded gold and listening to foreign broadcasts in the hope that a war will save them from collectivization, certainly have no ally in him. Yet he is warm-hearted and good; he is a friend of mankind. Not mankind as it is, but as it *should* be. He is not unlike the inquisitor of the Middle Ages; but whereas the latter tortured the flesh in the belief that he was saving the individual soul, the intellectual of the New Faith is working for the salvation of the human species in general.

His chief characteristic is his fear of thinking for himself. It is not merely that he is afraid to arrive at dangerous conclusions. His is a fear of sterility, of what Marx called the misery of philosophy. I myself am not entirely free of a like fear as I write these words. Let us admit that a man is no more than an instrument in an orchestra directed by the muse of History. It is only in this context that the notes he produces have any significance. Otherwise even his most brilliant solos become simply a highbrow's diversions. We are not concerned with the question of how one finds the courage to oppose one's self to the majority. It is a much more poignant question that one poses to one's self: can one write well outside that one real stream whose vitality springs from its harmony with historical laws and the dynamics of reality? Rilke's poems may be very good; but if they are good, that means there must have been some reason for them in his day. Contemplative poems, such as his, could never appear in a popular democracy; not only because it would be difficult to publish them, but because the writer's impulse to write them would be destroyed at its very root. The ob-

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jective conditions for such poetry have disappeared; and the intellectual of whom I speak is not one who believes in writing for the bureau drawer. He curses and despairs over the censorship and demands of the publishing commissions. Yet at the same time, he distrusts profoundly the values of unlicensed literature. The publishing license he himself receives does not mean that the editor appreciates the artistic merits of his book, nor that he expects it to be popular with the public. That license is simply a sign that the author reflects the transformation of reality with scientific exactness. Dialectical materialism in the Stalinist version both reflects and directs this transformation. It creates social and political conditions in which a man ceases to think and write otherwise than as is necessary. He accepts this "must" because nothing worthwhile can exist outside its limits. Herein lie the claws of dialectics. The writer does not surrender to this "must" merely because he fears for his own skin. He fears for something much more precious —the significance of his work. He believes that the by-ways of "philosophizing" lead to a greater or lesser degree of graphomania. Anyone gripped in the claws of dialectics is forced to admit that the thinking of private philosophers, unsupported by citations from authorities, is sheer nonsense. If this is so, then one's total effort must be directed toward following the line, and there is no point at which one can stop. A, which inevitably leads to B, is the first and unnoticed Murti-Bing pill. It is easily swallowed because it comes concealed in the various dishes that constitute the diet of the contemporary intellectual. No untrained mind or barren spirit could ever notice this first, disguised pill. Since I am no philosopher, it is my ambition not to analyze its ingredients, but merely to study its distribution.

The pressure of the state machine is nothing compared with the pressure of a convincing argument. I attended the artists' congresses in Poland in which the theories of Socialist realism were first discussed. The attitude of the audience toward the speakers delivering the required reports was decidedly hostile. Everyone considered Socialist realism to be an officially imposed theory that would have, as Russian art demonstrates, deplorable results. Attempts to provoke discussion failed. The hall remained silent. Usually, however, one daring artist would launch an attack, full of restrained sarcasm,

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with the silent but obvious support of the entire audience. He would invariably be crushed by superior reasoning plus practicable threats against the future career of an undisciplined individual. Given the conditions of convincing argument plus threats, the necessary conversion will take place. That is mathematically certain.

The faces of the listeners at these congresses were not too legible, for the art of masking one's feelings had already been perfected to a considerable degree. Still one was aware of successive waves of emotion: anger, fear, amazement, distrust, and finally thoughtfulness. I had the impression of participating in a demonstration of mass hypnosis. These people could laugh and joke afterwards in the corridors. But the harpoon had hit its mark; and henceforth wherever they may go, they will always carry it with them. Do I believe that the dialectic of the speakers was unanswerable? Yes, as long as there was no fundamental discussion of methodology. No one among those present was prepared for such a discussion. It would probably have been a debate on Hegel, whose reading public was not made up of painters and writers. Moreover, even if someone had wanted to start such a debate, he would have been silenced. Such discussions are permitted—and even then, fearfully—only in the upper circles of the Party.

These artists' congresses reveal the inequality between the weapons of the dialectician and those of his adversary. A match between the two is like a duel between a foot soldier and a tank. Not that every dialectician is so very intelligent or so very well educated: but all his statements are enriched by the cumulated thought of the masters and their commentators. If every sentence he speaks is compact and precise, that is not due to his own merits, but to those of the classics he has studied. His listeners are defenseless. They could, it is true, resort to arguments derived from their observations of life; but such arguments are just as badly countenanced as any questioning of fundamental methodology. The dialectician rubs up against his public at innumerable meetings of professional organizations and youth groups in clubs, factories, office buildings, and village huts throughout the entire converted area of Europe. And there is no doubt that he emerges the victor in these encounters.

It is no wonder that a writer or painter doubts the wisdom of resistance. If he were sure that art opposed to the official line can

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have a lasting value, he would not hesitate. He would earn his living through some more menial job within his profession; write or paint in his spare time; and never worry about publishing or exhibiting his work. He believes, however, that in most cases such work would be artistically poor; and he is not too far wrong. As we have already said, the objective conditions he once knew have disappeared. The objective conditions necessary to the realization of a work of art are, as we know, a highly complex phenomenon, involving one's public, the possibility of contact with it, the general atmosphere, and above all freedom from involuntary subjective control.

I can't write as I would like to [a young Polish poet admitted to me]. My own stream of thought has so many tributaries, that I barely succeed in damming off one, when a second, third or fourth overflows. I get halfway through a phrase, and already I submit it to Marxist criticism. I imagine what X or Y will say about it, and I change the ending.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is this subjective impotence that convinces the intellectual that the one method is right. Everything proves it is right. Dialectics: I predict the house will burn; then I pour gasoline over the stove. The house burns; my prediction is fulfilled. Dialectics: I predict that a work of art incompatible with Socialist realism will be worthless. Then I place the artist in conditions in which such a work *is* worthless. My prediction is fulfilled.

Let us take poetry as an example. Obviously there is poetry of political significance. Lyric poetry is permitted to exist on certain conditions. It must be: (1) serene; (2) free of any elements of thought that might trespass against the universally accepted principles (in practice, this comes down to descriptions of nature and of one's own feelings for friends and family); (3) understandable. Since a poet who is not allowed to *think* automatically tends to perfect his form, he is accused of formalism.

It is not only the literature and painting of the popular democracies that prove to the intellectual that *things cannot be different*. He is strengthened in this belief by the news that seeps through from the West. The Western world is the world of Witkiewicz's novel. The number of its aesthetic and philosophical aberrations is myriad. Disciples imitate disciples; the past imitates the past. This world lives as if there had never been a second World War. Eastern

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Europe knows this life; but knows it as a stage of the past that isn't worth looking back on. Even if the new problems are so oppressive that they can break a great many people, at least they are contemporary. And mental discipline and the obligation to be clear are undoubtedly precious. The work of really fine Western scholars and artists escapes notice. The only new names that are known are those of "democrats"—a delicate circumlocution that means one is not dealing with a pagan. In short, the recompense for all pain is the certainty that one belongs to the new and conquering world as its propaganda would have one think.

Mystery shrouds the political moves determined on high, in the distant Center. People speak about prominent figures in hushed voices. In the vast expanses of Euro-Asia, whole nations can vanish without leaving a trace. Armies number into millions. Terror becomes socially useful and effective. Philosophers rule the state—obviously not philosophers in the traditional sense of the word, but dialecticians. The conviction grows that the whole world will be conquered. Great hordes of followers appear on all the continents. Lies are born from seeds of truth. The philosophically uneducated, bourgeois enemy is despised for his inherited inability to think. (Classes condemned by the laws of history perish because their minds are paralyzed.) The boundaries of the Empire move steadily and systematically westward. Unparalleled sums of money are spent on scientific research. One prepares to rule all the people of the earth. Is all this too little? Surely this is enough to fascinate the intellectual. As he beholds these things, historical fatalism takes root in him. In a rare moment of sincerity he may confess cynically, "I bet on this horse. He's good. He'll carry me far."

A delinquent has a hard time, however, when the moment comes for him to swallow Murti-Bing in its *entirety*. He becomes such a nervous wreck, that he may actually fall ill. He knows it means a definite parting with his former self, his former ties and habits. If he is a writer, he cannot hold a pencil in his hand. The whole world seems dark and hopeless. Until now, he paid a minimal tribute: in his articles and novels, he described the evils of capitalist society. But after all, it isn't difficult to criticize capitalism; and it can be done absolutely honestly. The charlatans of the stock

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exchange, feudal barons, self-deluding artists, and the instigators of nationalistic wars are figures who lend themselves readily to his pen. But now he must begin to *approve*. (In official terminology this is known as a transition from the stage of critical realism to that of Socialist realism. It occurred in the newly established popular democracies about the year 1950.) The operation he must perform on himself is one that some of his friends have already undergone, more or less painfully. They shake their heads sympathetically, knowing the process and its outcome. "I have passed the crisis," they say serenely. "But how he is suffering. He sits at home all day with his head in his hands."

The hardest thing to conquer is his feeling of *guilt*. No matter what his convictions, every man in the countries of which I speak is a part of an ancient civilization. His parents were attached to religion, or at least regarded it with respect. In school, much attention was devoted to his religious upbringing. Some emotional traces of this early training necessarily remain. In any case, he believes that injury to one's fellow man, lies, murder, and the encouragement of hatred are evil, even if they serve to accomplish one's ends. Obviously, too, he studied the history of his country. He read its former poets and philosophers with pleasure and pride. He was proud of its century-long battle to defend its frontiers and of its struggle for independence in the dark periods of foreign occupation. Consciously or unconsciously, he feels a certain loyalty to this history of toil and sacrifice on the part of his forefathers. Moreover, from earliest childhood, he has been taught that his country belongs to a civilization that has been derived from Rome. He has been imbued with the concept that his native land is bound to Europe by ties he should cherish and cultivate. He once parsed Vergil's poetry, learned the history of Dante's life, and laughed at Rabelais' jokes. He tended to consider the centers of this ancient tradition—France, England, Italy—as culturally linked with his own country.

Now, knowing that he must enter a gate through which he can never return, he feels he is doing *something wrong*. He explains to himself that he must destroy this irrational and childish feeling. Only by weeding out the roots of what is irretrievably past, can he become free. Still the battle wages on. A cruel battle—a battle between an angel and a demon. True, but which is the angel; and

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which, the demon? One has a bright face he has known since his childhood; this must be the angel. No, for this face bears certain hideous scars. It is the face of the old order, of stupid college fraternities, of the senile imbecility of politicians, of the decrepitude of Western Europe. This is death and decadence. The other face is strong and self-contained, the face of a tomorrow that beckons. Angelic? This is doubtful.

There is a great deal of talk about patriotism; about fine, progressive, national traditions; about veneration of the past. But no one is so naive as to take such talk seriously. The reconstruction of a few historical monuments, or the re-edition of the works of former writers cannot change certain revealing and important facts. The country has become a province of the Empire, ruled by edicts from the Center. It retains some autonomy, but to an ever-diminishing degree. Perhaps the era of independent states is over; perhaps they are no more than museum pieces. Yet it is saddening to say good-by to one's dreams of a federation of equal nations, of a United States of Europe in which differing languages and differing cultures would have equal status. It isn't pleasant to surrender to the hegemony of a nation which is still wild and primitive, and to concede the absolute superiority of its customs and institutions, science and technology, literature and art. Must one sacrifice so much in the name of the unity of mankind? The nations of Western Europe will pass through this phase of integration later, and perhaps more gently. It is possible that they will be more successful in preserving their native language and culture. By that time, however, all of Eastern Europe will be using the one universal tongue, Russian. And the principle of a "culture that is national in form, socialist in content" will be consummated in a culture of monolithic uniformity. Everything will be shaped by the Center; though individual countries will retain a few local ornaments in the way of folklore. The Universal City will be realized when a son of the Kirghiz steppes waters his horses in the Loire, and a Sicilian peasant plants cotton in Turkomen valleys. Small wonder the writer smiles at propaganda that cries for a freeing of colonies from the grasp of imperialistic powers. O how cunning dialectics can be, and how artfully it can accomplish its ends, degree by degree!

How bitter all this is. But what about the harbinger of the

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Springtime of Nations; and Karl Marx; and the visions of the brotherhood of mankind? After all, nothing can be accomplished without the iron rule of a single Master. And what about this Master? A great Polish poet, describing his journey to the East—where he went in 1824 as a political prisoner of the Tsar—compared the soul of the Russian nation to a chrysalis. He wondered anxiously what would emerge when the sun of freedom shone: "Then will a shining butterfly take flight, or a moth, a somber creature of the night?" So far, nothing prophesies a joyous butterfly.

The writer, in his fury and frustration, turns his thought to Western Communists. What fools they are. He can forgive their oratory if it is necessary as propaganda. But they believe most of what they proclaim about the sacred Center; and that is unforgivable. Nothing can compare to the contempt he feels for these sentimental fools.

Nevertheless, despite his resistance and despair, the crisis approaches. It can come in the middle of the night, at his breakfast table, or on the street. It comes with a metallic click as of engaged gears. *But there is no other way.* That much is clear. There is no other salvation on the face of the earth. This revelation lasts a second; but from that second on the patient begins to recover. For the first time in a long while he eats with relish; his movements take on vigor; his color returns. He sits down and writes a "positive" article, marveling at the ease with which he writes it. In the last analysis there was no reason for raising such a fuss. Everything is in order. He is past the "crisis."

He does not emerge unscathed, however. The after-effects manifest themselves in a particular kind of extinguishment, that is often perceptible in the twist of his lips. His face expresses the peaceful sadness of one who has tasted the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; of one who knows he lies; of one who feels compassion for those who have been spared full knowledge. He has already gone through what still awaits so many others.

In 1945, an eminent Soviet journalist came to Poland. He was an elderly gentleman, who looked like a middle-class lawyer. That he was an extremely clever and completely unscrupulous person was evidenced by the tenacity with which he had maintained his position—and by his advanced years. After his return to Warsaw from

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a tour of several provincial Polish towns, he laughingly recounted an incident that had occurred in Silesia. Someone had spread the report that a delegation of foreigners from the West had arrived. The journalist (whose round belly and honest expression were inducive to such effusive manifestations of confidence) was seized and embraced on the street by a man crying "The English have come!" "That's just how it was in the Ukraine in 1919" was his comment on the incident. This recurrence of sterile hopes amused him and he was flattered to be the representative of a country ruled according to infallible predictions; for nation after nation had indeed become part of its Empire, according to schedule. I am not sure that there wasn't in his smile something of the compassionate *superiority* that a housewife feels for a mouse caught in her trap.

The "post-crisis" writer may well expect one day to be sent on a similar journalistic mission to some newly acquired western country. Such a prospect is not altogether distasteful. To observe people who know nothing, who still have everything to learn, must undoubtedly afford moments of unadulterated sweetness. The master knows that the trap in which the mouse has been caught is not an entirely agreeable place in which to live. For the moment, however, the citizens of these newly converted countries will understand little of their new situation. They will be exhilarated at first by the flutter of national banners, the blare of marching bands, and the proclamations of long-awaited reforms. Only he, the observer, will see into the future like a god, and know it to be hard, necessarily hard, for such are the laws of History.

In the epilogue of Witkiewicz's novel, his heroes, who have gone over to the service of Murti-Bing, become schizophrenics. The events of today bear out his vision, even in this detail. One can survive the "crisis" and function perfectly, writing or painting as one must; but the old moral and aesthetic standards continue to exist on some deep inner plane. Out of this arises a split within the individual that makes for many difficulties in the daily life of popular democracies. It facilitates the task of ferreting out heretical thoughts and inclinations; for, thanks to it, the Murti-Bingist can feel himself into his opponent with great acuteness. *The new phase and the old phase* are co-existent in him; and together they render him an experienced psychologist, a keeper of his brother's conscience.

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One can expect that the new generation, raised from the start in the new society, will be free of this split. But that cannot be brought about quickly. One would have to rid one's self completely of the Church, which is a difficult matter, and one that demands patience and tact. And even if one could eliminate this reverenced mainstay of irrational impulses, national literatures would remain to exert their malignant influence. For example, the works of the greatest Polish poets are marked by a dislike of Russia; and the dose of Catholic philosophy one finds in them is alarming. Yet the state must publish certain of these poets and must teach them in its schools for they are the classics, the creators of the literary language, and are considered to be the forerunners of the Revolution. To place them on the index would be to think non-dialectically and to fall into the sin of "left-ism." It is a difficult dilemma, more difficult in the converted countries than in the Center, where the identification of national culture with the interests of humanity has been achieved to a much greater degree. (But trouble exists even there, for its youth, despite sensible persuasion, insists upon reading Dostoevsky.) Probably, therefore, the schizophrenic as a type will not disappear in the near future.

Someone might contend that Murti-Bing is a medicine that is incompatible with human nature. That is not a very strong argument. The Aztecs' custom of offering human sacrifices to their gods or the mortification of their own flesh practiced by the hermits in the early centuries of Christianity scarcely seem praiseworthy. Yet they were practiced successfully. The worship of gold has become a motive power second to none in its brutality. Seen from this perspective, Murti-Bing does not violate the nature of human kind.

Whether a man who has taken the Murti-Bing cure attains internal peace and harmony is another question. He attains a relative degree of harmony, just enough to render him active. It is preferable to the torment of pointless rebellion and groundless hope. The peasants, who are incorrigible in their petty-bourgeois attachments, assert that "a change must come, because *this can't go on.*" This is an amusing belief in the natural order of things. A tourist, as an anecdote tells us, wanted to go up into the mountains; but it had been raining for a week. He met a mountaineer walking by a stream, and asked him if it would continue to pour. The mountaineer looked at the swelling stream and voiced the opinion that it would not. When

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asked on what basis he had made his prediction, he said "Because it would overflow." Murti-Bing holds such magic judgments to be fossil remains of a past era. The "new" is striving to overcome the "old," but the "old" cannot be eliminated all at once.

The one thing that seems to deny the flawlessness of Murti-Bing is the apathy that is born in people, and that continues to live in spite of their feverish activity. It is hard to define; and at times one might suppose it to be a mere optical illusion. In the last analysis, people bestir themselves, work, go to the theater, applaud speakers, take excursions, fall in love, and have children. Yet there is something impalpable and unpleasant in the human climate of such cities as Warsaw or Prague. The collective atmosphere, resulting from an exchange and a re-combination of individual elements, is bad. It is an aura of strength and unhappiness, of internal paralysis and external mobility. Whatever we may call it, this much is certain: if Hell should guarantee its lodgers magnificent quarters, beautiful clothes, the tastiest food and all possible amusements, but condemn them to breathe in this aura forever, that would be punishment enough. No propaganda, either pro or con, can capture so elusive and little-known a phenomenon. It escapes all calculations. It cannot exist on paper. Admitting, in a whispered conversation, that something of the sort does exist, one must seek a rational explanation for it. Undoubtedly the "old," fearful and oppressed, is taking its vengeance by spilling forth its inky fluid like a wounded octopus. But surely the Socialist organism, in its growth toward a future of guaranteed prosperity, is already strong enough to counteract this poison; or perhaps it is too early for that. When the younger generation, free from the malevolent influence of the "old," arises, everything will change. Only, whoever has observed the younger generation in the Center is reluctant to cast such a horoscope. Then we must postpone our hopes to the remote future, to a time when the Center and every dependent state will supply its citizens with refrigerators and automobiles, with white bread and a handsome ration of butter. Maybe then, at last, they will be satisfied.

Why won't the equation work out as it should, when every step is logical? Do we have to use non-Euclidean geometry on material as adaptable and plastic as a human being? Won't the ordinary variety satisfy them? What in the hell does a man need?

(*Translated by Jane Zielonko*)

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James Burnham

PARAKEETS AND PARCHESI: AN INDIAN MEMORANDUM

Polk Strait, which separates the southeastern tip of India from Ceylon, is narrow. From a plane at 7,000 feet the eye, verifying by a glance the conclusion of the geologists, links the island to the subcontinent. Below in the serene water, like an old New England road nearly drowned beneath the scrub and weeds, there stretches in a line halfway across the Strait a series of sand formations, just breaking the surface of the sea. These are the remains of Adam's Bridge. When Rama left Ceylon after his swift visit, he took the Princess back with him to India. The pilot of our plane was, by chance, Ceylonese, and as he then told the story, the good King of Ceylon started in pursuit of the kidnaper. The Strait was in the King's way, but his friends, the monkeys, built for him in a twinkling the great bridge the relics of which we still could so plainly see below us. The Indians, naturally enough reversing the ethical roles, turn the King of Ceylon into the God of Evil. They agree, however, that the monkeys (though to enable Rama to flee, not the King to follow) were the Bridge's architects and builders. It is for this act of Rama's salvation that the monkeys became sacred in India, and now sit uninterrupted in the streets to pick each other's lice, and in the countryside, undisturbed by the starving spectators, strip fruit and grain and leaves.

The gap, non-existent geologically, and spatially so inconsequential at 200 miles per hour, was world-wide in feeling. The mountain air of the plane joined with the delicious blue of the water to sponge off the relentless heat of the airport at Trichy a half-hour in the past, and to erase the pointless questions of the control officer, a young man already famed through the East for his removal of the last flaw of sense from bureaucratic procedures. Ahead, the green of Ceylon rose to wash our eyes, which were still smarting from a thousand miles of the red, unshaded Indian soil.

To leave India was like escaping from a bottle, or like that shift in August from a New York pavement to the dark interior of an air-conditioned bar. The arrival at Colombo did not contradict our sense of freedom regained. Though the April thermometer reading was as high as Bombay's, the heat was cut by trees, wide leaves, and lawns and parks of well-cropped grass. The smell of flowers and the sea was

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unmixed with corruption. The neat Western clothes of the men were as white as their teeth against their dark brown skin. The laughing suddenly reminded us how rare a laugh is in India.

Ceylon, though, was only a three days' detour. Two weeks later, we left India again, this time from Calcutta, for Bangkok. Against the immediate background of Calcutta in the midst of the hot season, the feeling of explosive relief was even more total. Calcutta, eastern paw of the Indian cat, had scratched us deep before we were let go. Sharing in the farewell indignities, our intestines, until then proudly defiant of the prophecies of our traveled friends, were twisted into knots. This was as much a moral as a physical wound. On the first of our two Calcutta noons, the immense heat had finally, like Ugolino's hunger, overcome our hygienic pieties. For the first time in India, we had had ice put into our drinks, and, thus fallen, one lump of ice led quickly to another. For this sin, on the next (and last) morning, the gripes duly punished us—or so, at any rate, it irrefutably seemed on the moral balance sheet which one always strikes at the onset of pain or disaster.

Most disturbing of all was the morning of departure. Planes leave early from Indian cities: partly from the early-to-bed and to-rise goodyness of the new nation, and partly in order to get the trips as much as possible over with before the full sun, smashing at the land, has filled the air with convection currents in which planes buck and rear like rodeo Brahmas. Since the border slough of papers, questionnaires, permits, authorizations, police cards, visas and declarations through which one must wade is wide enough to make a Western bureaucrat suicidal with envy, these early airplane hours impose an almost NKVD regime on the departing visitor, who must sleep with his packed bag beside him, and awaken in the dark to the summons at the door.

As, then, dawn and the day were beginning, the grinding and springless bus took us to the airport through fifteen or so miles of the spread-out city. Daybreak over the streets and gutters of Calcutta does not recall that charming, René Clair succession of sounds and cheerful sights through which Paris or London, or even New York, starts, still fresh, to go about its daily business. In Calcutta, all those morning-pangs that Paris or New York hides behind walls and shaded windows are there in the streets before you. The day openly begins with the ugliness, but not the joy, of birth. For hundreds of thousands, these streets and gutters are bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, parlor and closet. There is something quite unspeakable, as well as tragic and absorbing, in looking into a thousand beds at once, and watching a thousand scarecrow humans going through a kind of infantile parody of the

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ritual of rising. The secret scratchings and movements, the grimaces and adjustments, were unblinkably public. Squatting by twos on the curb, one scarecrow—member, I suppose, of the appropriate caste, for the act was never self-done—shaved another. Men pissed squatting, as they seem to do generally in India. Children looked at the fly-buzzed heaps of rice and other grains in the opening hut-like shops.

The identic street was also, of course, stable, or rather temple, as well as house. On all sides, their diseased and bone-protruding divinities, the gray and milk-dried cows, were sleepily stirring their frames. The first sacred shite of the new morning, destined later for hearth-fire or, mixed with mud, for wall of swarming hut, splashed close beside a still unconscious worshiper, or by the counter of a devout food merchant. Their serenities were conscious of their place. They took their time about leaving their nocturnal couch, and, before mixing with the passing throng, tranquilly surveyed their world and subjects. Here, two Olympians strolled down the trolley tracks, while two cars, passengers bulging from the windows and hanging from the sides, followed obediently in retinue, bells hushed. There, in a dusty lot between two office buildings, perhaps fifty of the deathless companions were gathered in a morning audience. By twos and threes they nuzzled the roadside altar-bins erected to hold the offerings of food and drink. Graciously, here and there, a single goddess received from a favored worshiper a small bundle of hay, or a handful of golden grain.

The plane for Bangkok, a K.L.M. Constellation fresh from Amsterdam, was waiting on the field. After the last round of form-fillings, as the sun completed its clean-up of each guerrilla patch of coolness that had infiltrated under cover of the night, we popped like a cork into the stomach of the blue and silver sky-whale. The plane door was Alice's mirror: and on the other side, the inverse wonderland of the West. How clean was each inch of upholstery, how rationally arranged each functional gadget! The tall, blond Dutch steward and the brisk, blonde, bronzed Dutch stewardess, with their unclouded blue eyes and their well-soaped, unspotted skin, and their nurse-clean blouse and shirt, looked as if they had just jumped, intact and fully clothed, out of the forehead of a laundry machine. How was it possible for brandy to taste as good as in those draughts which, at such an hour, as the plane reached the cool air at 13,000 feet, we wickedly commanded? How could bowels, so lately writhing in the Third Circle, so rejoice as at that Flemish meal, wafted by the magic of the West from a scrubbed Dutch kitchen to our receptive laps?

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Nor did Siam noticeably retighten the screw. The spires of stupas in the temple enclosures, the lines of bicycle-rickshaws, the saffron-robed shaved-headed Buddhist monks, the green and orange roofs of the imperial palace, with the piebald enameled columns and monster sculptures of warriors, elephants, sages and peacocks, the breeze-played temple bells and the sacred snake symbols springing from the roof tops, the brown children slipping in and out of the water of the *klongs* along the banks of which the brown stilted houses, topped by cocoanut-hanging palms, stand like friendly fishermen—all this is strange enough to Western eyes. To meet it as the first acquaintance of the East must surely be a jolt. But, after India, Bangkok was almost home.

Before the end of the three days in Ceylon, and after only two or three in Siam, we found that the relief of these departures was also a let-down. The Indian sauce, it seemed, had stunned, or spoiled, the taste buds. Even physical objects seemed less solid, as if India, by sustaining a temperature of reality higher than that of its neighbors, were defying some law of ontodynamics, as if, in fact, reality was here flowing in reverse, from low to high potential. Escaped from that metaphysical Kolyma, the spirit's teeth were left with not enough to chew on; the resistance to reason vanished, not as in the sudden illumination of a form at last intuited, but with the dismaying vacuum of a judo trick.

I suppose that one can visit India untouched. It was done, apparently, by those British nymphs who confined their Indian dance to compound, club, and viceregal garden. It can still be done within the limits of the new city of Delhi: a Brahman city of government, diplomats, and civil servants, marked off by wide lawns, fountains and boulevards from the untouchable hinterland which it so precariously rules. It can be done, but only with the aid of an empty or a very resolute spirit, for India is as if designed to assault Western sense and sensibility.

Each sense, and every spiritual rampart is systematically attacked. The nose is never released by that remarkable smell of the Indian city: compound of heavy flowers, filth, incense smoking from great piles, dried excrement and dust, the rotted corruption of half-burned human entrails, thrown into the river from the funeral *ghats,* uncovered sewers, fruit and foods displayed on open stands. The sounds seem to mask a secret, and perhaps a conspiracy: the sad oboe-like pipe of a watchman in the night, the harsh clacking, as if two boards were being struck sharply together, which we discovered to be the slapping of

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clothes against the laundry rocks, a kind of pervasive soft shuffling noise, from birds, bare feet, the big tropical ceiling fans, and the low, often whispering voices in which so many Hindus speak.

It is through the eyes, those windows to the soul, that the main thrust is carried. We, whose culture is Anglo-Saxon as well as European, have decided, for the sake of business and tranquillity, not to look at many things. Our animals are murdered by professional executioners, in parts of town which we do not visit, and we receive into our ken only the unreproaching steak and chop. Our idiots and halt and senile, we lock up behind walls and grass and trees, where we seldom or never pass. We thrust birth and disease and death into the sterilizing pans of our hospitals. We consider beggars in the streets a crime against the law as well as nature. The poor, if they are always with us, are taught to be decent and respectable, to keep the floor clean and the curtains drawn. In the extremity of our squeamishness, we even begin to abolish poverty itself.

But India, with the pedantry of the traditional villain who compels the fair maiden to witness the torture of her lover, puts everything naked before us. This poverty, compared to which our lowest Neapolitan slum is palace, is neither decent nor respectable, but stark, abject, disease- and dirt-ridden, absolutely and unyieldingly wretched. These are no quaint and human beggars: alcoholic Irishmen who you know will use the quarter for a shot of bad whiskey, or picturesque town characters adding a little spice to the night life, or, perhaps, a fellow who has had a bad break and may make a comeback with a bit of help to tide him over. These beggars are thoroughbreds, born and trained for the sport of saints. They arise out of the ground at the approach of a stranger, like the damned before Dante and Vergil in the wildest chasms of Hell. They are thinner than skeletons, with distorted strings of black hair, backward twisted feet, stumps for arms, with sprouts of cartilege or flesh growing out in a dozen directions like new shoots from the stump of a maple, blind eyes with dripping sockets, withered babies, pus-filled sores, and voices that whine like sawmills.

The low-caste "sweepers" in the hotels or private homes—the lowest of them among the Untouchable "scheduled castes" which have been abolished by the new Constitution, but not by life—do not allow the higher-born the moral luxury of the reflection that all men are after all equal, in worth, dignity, law, and so on. For millennia, the shadow of an Untouchable has been enough to pollute a high-caste Hindu. No doubt that is part of the explanation why the sweepers, sub-human by definition, move, on the approach of anyone except a

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colleague, in such a way that no shadow is thrown: cringing, on all fours, against the floor, and crawling like an interrupted bug against the wall or into a corner.

In the trees below the abandoned battlements of Fatehpur Sikri, the green parakeets flashed in the sun, as handsome and colorful as the gayest Mogul painting. But in the branches just outside the windows of our big white bedroom on Cumballa Hill, the birds were large and black. On the second morning, we recognized them. These were the vultures of Malabar Hill, half a mile away, who had come to digest the breakfast of Parsee bodies which had just been served them in the Towers of Silence. They sat by the windows, looking us over appraisingly as we lay there, undertakers studying the new stiffs on their slabs.

Nothing is hidden—which is perhaps the heart of the mystery. In the temples of Siva, there is an inner sanctuary, the holy of holies, the perambulation of which is the most sacred of ritual acts. The sanctuary's sole furnishing is a *lingam*: a massive, unadorned, upthrusting stone phallus. This is no witty or beauteous symbol, no creature of rational imagination prettily masked to slip past the Censor's prurient eye, but the essential prose, the thing itself. I was told that on one of the holy days at a temple in the south, a saintly yogi each year lies for all of the twenty-four hours on his back in the sanctuary. Through the power of his holiness and art, he maintains during the entire period an erection rivaling the stone *lingam* beside him. The barren wives of the region enter to him one by one, to be made fertile by the appropriate touch of his remarkable member.

Wealth, too, and luxury and power are as unblinkingly displayed. We did not visit any of the palaces of the princes, but it is plain that India's independence and their own political demotion have not yet toned down the unblushing extravagance of their personal lives. Much of the meaning of wealth is, as Marx taught, by contrast, and contrast is present as sharp as Picasso in every town. The stump-armed beggar opens the limousine's door. On the sidewalk in front of the city's luxury hotel sleep during the night the wretched poor, so that the departing guest has to step warily, as if searching for firm tufts in a marsh. At the gates of great houses, stick-thin children and mothers squat in the dust. Streetcars and buses swell with passengers, like a can of spoiled vegetable; and no European, or wealthy Indian, ever rides in a streetcar or local bus. The few who are very rich have, materially, everything; tens of millions have, quite simply, nothing.

It is impossible to be alone in India. Along every street, the crowds

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flow all day long, and lounge or sleep throughout the night. Our bedroom, in the house where we stayed in Bombay, had no doors, but only loose curtains across the openings, moving in the winds that filtered through the garden and across the porches. The morning began with a barefooted procession that equaled the first act of *Der Rosenkavalier.*

First came Ahmed Shah, the Moslem chief of the household staff, splendid in his starched white tulle head-dress, or more sober in gray caracul, to wake us, and—with a studied ignoring of Marcia, who as a woman should doubtless have been as invisible as his own obedient wife (whose face Ahmed Shah had never seen)—to bring my dressing gown, draw my bath, and make ready for breakfast. Then would come a silent man (all the servants are, of course, male: the women are servants of servants) whose sole function seemed to be to replace yesterday's with new-picked flowers, and to change the water in the bowls and vases. Outside on the porch, a kind of sub-gardener would be sweeping with a bundle of twigs. A relatively higher-caste *hamil,* qualified to touch the bed and our clothes, would enter, on bare feet without knocking, to carry out a few of his chores. For them all, it was a matter of entire indifference what we were doing or about to do. Lower-grade sweepers, of the sort that could get as far down as the floor itself, or even the unmentionables who venture into bathrooms, wandered in and out. The laundryman, or the laundryman's boy, would bring a shirt or two; the driver would come to be instructed about shoes to be repaired or suits to be dry-cleaned. Just beyond the curtained opening, a guard, armed with a dagger and a bundle of knitting, the latter of which he was observably adept at handling, kept continuous watch.

Whenever, in a place more or less public, you stop moving, you are instantly surrounded. As the car stops at the hotel door, it is not a single doorman who greets you and calls a single bellboy. The taxi or bus has not yet come to rest before dozens of doormen, porters, guides, salesmen, beggars and onlookers mass around you. A whole parade of porters takes the bags—one bag, no matter how small, to one man, with an unburdened boy to guide you, another to carry keys, and a couple more as impartial observers.

Even as you enter the door of a restaurant, a half-dozen bodies, pushing, jabbering, pointing, arguing, are precipitated out of the saturate air before you. It is impossible to have just one waiter at your table, nor can you shake off even for the time of a private bite or two, the hovering, officious attendance of the several who will have

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fastened themselves to your back. As you leave the hotel entrance, and even before you leave it, you are hauled and shoved by cab-drivers, starters, peddlers, guides, and always beggars. If your cab stops in front of a store or market, at once appear two or three bearers, with their large baskets, competing for your service, and several also of the nameless omnipresent persons who, though they usually know nothing of your language or intentions or interests, insist on piloting you along whatever course of shopping or sightseeing or plain business lies ahead, and who can be neither discouraged nor got rid of.

Vain is the hope for leisurely contemplation of temple or sculpture or tank in some quiet town away from the metropolis. As your car slows before the gate, forms spring from the surrounding earth. Every step of the passage through the temple enclosure will be accompanied by a vast, not silent retinue. Do not think that you will be permitted to look in your own good time at a particular carving of your choice: a figure, pointing elsewhere, chattering, pulling, will be at your side.

At the colossal rock sculptures, south of Madras near the site of the Seven Pagodas, a boy of 13 or 14 attached himself to us, for no possible functional purpose. He trotted along, a few feet behind. When we got back in the car, to drive on a mile or two to the carvings on the cliff face, and then to the one stone pagoda still left above the sea, he ran, under that red-hot sun, in pursuit. We finally left, and drove back three or four miles to a rest house, where we ate the sandwiches and drank the hot soda water which we had brought. Before the sandwiches were finished, our boy came dog-like up the dusty road.

And woe is yours if, overwhelmed by sentiment or guilt or love, you begin, before your car or train is already rolling in departure, to distribute alms among the desolate wretches who implore you. At those same rock sculptures, which stand on the empty land, in no town or village, my poor Marcia, torn beyond endurance by the misery she saw in a hag and child before her, and by, no doubt also, obscure memories of missionary sermons in her Presbyterian childhood, started, though she had been amply warned, to open her purse. At once, from every quarter of that empty horizon, like gulls infallibly centering toward the garbage about to be dropped astern, wild and grotesque shapes thronged clamoring around us. What was, or seemed to be, the dark and sudden threat did not subside until our driver, lounging ambiguously in some background shade, sprang to the rescue, with a volley of curses (by their sound, they must have been), and sharp blows for a number of heads. After all, we were his prey, not theirs.

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The inmost law of industrial civilization is the reduction of costs. In the era of machines, this law decrees the substitution of mechanical for human energy—machines instead of men. This is the principle that gives meaning and warmth to Western ideas of the "useful" and "rational" in moral conduct as well as in business and production. The Indian economy has not (with local exceptions) entered the era of machines; nor does Indian conduct accept even the deeper root principle of the reduction of costs. Therefore, inevitably, the absurdity in our eyes, the irrationality of so much of the Indian pattern of behavior.

The law of our civilization commands: for each task, the smallest possible expenditure of human labor. For India, with so many—so irrationally and absurdly many—humans, and so few machines, the opposite law prevails. If there is a slower or more laborious way to do it—whatever it may be, to clear passengers through customs or clean a room or till and water a field—then that is the better way.

One day we saw the grass being cut on a lawn within the Red Fort at Delhi. The small mower was being drawn by four men, with a fifth as—driver, I suppose he must be called. A rough calculation shows that, in the United States, the wages of four men for three days will pay for a motor-driven mower. *Therefore* (even limiting attention to this particular reduction of the problem), four men do not pull lawnmowers in America. And *therefore* (quite rationally for this example) in India they do. Or, again, at many of the Indian airfields, individual porters take bags one by one to load on the plane: porters are cheaper than the familiar little trucks, and porters with a one-bag capacity are relatively cheaper (in food, clothing, etc.) than those strong enough to handle several. Such equations, though odd, are understandable enough.

But how are we to assimilate to the Benthamite categories of our Western understanding the fact that Indians also violate the ultimate principle of the reduction of costs, and that they are quite capable of refusing to "improve their standard of living" even when it is easily possible for them to do so.

By slaughtering about 40 per cent of its cattle, and by controlled breeding practices applied to the remainder, India could have—Western reason can demonstrate—the most productive cattle and dairy industry in the world. The cows, however, are divine, and they are therefore not to be slaughtered—or restrained, even if their milk output is an ounce and a half a day, and their strength not enough to pull a six-inch plow, no, not if their holy legs are broken, their ribs caved in and their sides covered with sores. Thus the cows strip the land of food,

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to give in return—on the inapplicable Benthamite calculus—considerably less than nothing.

The impious leather industry, working on cattle dead by nature, is allotted to the lowest order of the Untouchables; and a powerful tendency of the Congress Party—numbering among its leaders Purushottamdas Tandon, the Congress President—has as its political platform the total elimination of leather footwear from Indian life.

Driving along a country road one day, we had the driver stop the car to see what two men were carrying in a kind of hammock slung to a long pole. The car drew to the side of the road in front of them, and they, declining to change their route in order to by-pass the car, stood still. As we walked back toward them, the assured head of a calf peered over the folds of cloth. The men explained through our driver that they were thus carrying the calf "because it was only a month old."

In 1570, the Emperor Akbar, who had already squared some sort of circle by marrying a Hindu, a Moslem, and a Christian, and by adopting for his own faith a fusion of his wives' contradictory professions, built the fortress-city of Fatehpur Sikri. After living in it, as his capital, for fifteen years, he, and all other human beings, abandoned it forever—why, no man knows. Fatehpur Sikri still stands, almost intact in that dry, hot air. The red sandstone, of which it is built and carved, glows in the sun. Vast empty courtyards are bounded by pavilions, many-storied columned treasuries, and great towers. Each wife has a palace of her own, with the red stone intricately cut for each in the style of her faith and culture. Great balconies overlook stone channels planned in the Mogul fashion for continuously flowing water, audience halls open to the sun, and a gigantic parchesi board on which the pieces, played by the Court, were pretty boys and girls. In this red city, with the least of changes, tens of thousands of Indians could live better housed than all but a handful of their countrymen. Though two large villages have welled up only a few miles away, no one but a colony of monkeys, invariably seen just as they disappear over a wall or balustrade into a remoter section, lives in Fatehpur Sikri, or has ever lived there in the three centuries and a half since the withdrawal of Akbar.

A sensible utilitarian, when he makes a little money, improves his standard of life, as all the world knows—gets a cup of coffee or a Cadillac. You can, on an Indian street, see the rupee that a starved Hindu has somehow got hold of, passing to the soothsayer who is reading his palm, or buying an offering for the responsive goddess of fertility. One often sees two brilliant diamonds set into the skin at the sides of the noses of shrunk peasant women, or a ruby on a kind of toe-ring or anklet.

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Nehru does not idly declaim when he says that his people will not bargain over famine, nor does a proof that intransigence on Kashmir is "against Indian interests" carry very deep into an Indian mind.

Against the velvet blackness of the Indian context, the non-Indian is abstracted into a type. We Whites observe that all Negroes (or Chinese or Japanese or Polynesians) look so much alike that it is hard to see how mother can recognize child, or bride her lover. So, in the Vedantic frame, do those cherished differences that define the separate essences of our Western egos, drop one by one away. By the last day of the Bombay Congress for Cultural Freedom,[1] from among the foreign delegation only Max Yergan, the Negro sociologist, was, thanks to his dark skin, distinctive and distinguishable. The soft, doughy faces from Europe and America were a single batch of half-cooked biscuits. Tall Stephen Spender, with his schoolboy hair, looked the twin of that spry and mischievous ancient, Don Salvador de Madariaga.

My good wife, made unique for me by all the specialties of seventeen married years, has always struck me as among the last candidates for Mrs. American Matron. But we stopped one day at the foot of an open stairway that mounted to a ledge on a hill where the eagles had once brought food to the hungry Rama, and where, ever since and now, at exactly eleven each morning, two eagles come from the sky to receive their food in return. It was (it always was) inappeasably hot, and all the levels of the stairway were peopled with vendors of religious cartoons and scrolls, water-sellers, beggars, holy men, cripples, children, and pilgrims making their ascent. As we walked up, the only "Europeans," the beggars or merchants in our nearer environs took up their formal chants, or wails, and the sari-wrapped, nose-jeweled women flowed softly up toward where the eagles would soon alight. I looked up from a bearer of curious jars, and found that Marcia had disappeared, or rather been transmogrified into an anonymous universal White distilled from all the novels and the stories of the East. There she was, stepped from the assembly-line, pale skin, grossly tall and large, wide hat, high shoes, bulging purse, too open eyes, puffed broad-skirted dress in place of secretively wrapped and introspective sari, even the camera in hand.

The reduction to type extended from visible appearance to mind

1. The immediate occasion of my trip to India was an invitation to attend the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom, which took place in Bombay during the last week of March of this year. The other Americans and Europeans whom I mention here and further on were also among the guest delegates to this Congress.

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and conscience. Each day the Indians became more various. Moslems and Hindus and Parsees, northerners and southerners, Bengali and Maharati, Brahmans and Untouchables, sifted apart like—Englishmen and Russians and Spaniards. *X* and *Y* became Jayaprakash, Minoo, and Kish. But each day the "Europeans" drew closer to a collective symbol.

Within a week, the difference between Senator McCarthy and Secretary Acheson had become at most a choice of adverbs. The President's dismissal of MacArthur, which occurred while we were in Madras, was the occasion chiefly of surprise that two men with identical views should have fallen out over some obscure misunderstanding. In debates and discussions at Bombay, the dozen of us from the West, who at home (that is, in Paris or New York, London or Rome or Berlin) differ on nearly every subject that can be stated, were never—though we neither consulted nor planned together—in more than a moment's disagreement.

It was impossible for an American not to sound like—an American. Long Island's and socialism's Norman Thomas, watching the lovely Shakuntala Masani dance in the classic Hindu mode, was a Kansas farmer with even a Kansas drawl. Herman Muller, Nobel geneticist and one-time colleague of Lysenko, faced with the mud hutments of the Bombay masses, quivered with the reformist passions of Hull House. Wystan Auden, for all his poet's renunciation of King and class, pronounced like a somnambulist, at the end of Shakuntala's cobra-entrancing, Siva-seducing dance: "Not my cup of tea."

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CROSS COUNTRY

"THE NEW YORKER" IN HOLLYWOOD

Nobody knew her before she came. Nobody would have paid the slightest attention to her had she come on her own. She was a pleasant and friendly person, to be sure, but not particularly decorative—something which ordinarily would have eliminated her immediately from circulation in Hollywood; she was not even what is known as an "interesting person." There was nothing in her present life that any columnist would have been interested in—except for the fame into which she was catapulted by writing a literary portrait of Hemingway. Nor did she have a "past": she came from a middle-class family, went to Hunter College, joined *The New Yorker* after graduation, and slowly worked herself up into the position of a regular staff writer. This is a perfectly honest and respectable background; from the Hollywood point of view, however, it was strictly dull—except for the fact that she had joined *The New Yorker* and not *Harper's*.

Now the girl from *The New Yorker* had come to Hollywood to do a full-length study of John Huston and the movie colony. For the assignment she had been equipped with a special wardrobe; she had brought along, as reading material, a complete set of bound volumes of *The New Yorker;* and she was preceded, upon her entry onto the stage of Hollywood, by the reputation she had earned from spending a week end in the company of Mr. Hemingway.

The piece on Hemingway was well written; it displayed all the finesse and transparent sophistication by which *The New Yorker* sets the style for those of us engaged in a harmless and vicarious flirtation with the "finer things" of life: imported perfumes and mink coats, a new showing of Modiglianis, cartoons by Charles Addams, or insights into the private lives of Hemingway and Toots Shor. There is something reassuringly democratic about these intimate glimpses of men of distinction: through the peep-hole we see them in the right context—Hemingway side by side with Toots Shor—and feel relieved. After all, they too are only human, all-too-human, that is, right there on our own level.

The portrait made Mr. Hemingway—one of the great writers of

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this country and the world—look like a retarded adolescent, or like a disgusting cross between an imbecile and a brute blabbering phony Indian baby talk and vulgarities; perhaps that's the way he is; then again, perhaps that's the way he chose to appear for the benefit of the girl from *The New Yorker.* Be that as it may, the reporter did her job well: we certainly got Ernie's number; we know that he begins his day with a magnum of champagne; and we know just how he feels about the *Kraut,* Marlene Dietrich.

It used to be that these portraits of distinguished contemporaries were invariably drawn from representatives within a certain radius of the great city or, at least, from the Eastern seaboard; but now it seems as if *The New Yorker* has broken with this old and firmly-established policy. What is behind this change of policy (if it be one), and what is the reason for choosing Hollywood as the most logical place for making the change, I am not in a position to say.

Not that Mr. Huston doesn't deserve to have a portrait written about him. He is a prominent man in the movie colony and a very good director of motion pictures. He can certainly hold his own with Toots. Of course, Mr. Louis B. Mayer may tell you, in a moment of desperation, that none of Mr. Huston's pictures has made any money; or he may buttonhole the producer of Mr. Huston's latest opus, *The Red Badge of Courage,* and ask some pertinent and embarrassing questions: to wit, who knows anything today about an "immortal classic" by Stephen Crane (quite right, Mr. Mayer); the Civil War was a long time ago, wasn't it (right again, Mr. Mayer); besides, it was simply kids' stuff in comparison with what audiences expect from a war now (it sure was, Mr. Mayer); those soldiers look awfully funny with those visors on their military caps (they sure do, Mr. Mayer); you like to draw a fat pay check every week, don't you; so why shouldn't I worry about the box office returns (yes, why shouldn't you, Mr. Mayer)——but this is the other side of Hollywood perhaps evoking the somber shades of Wall Street, but not the light touch and finesse of *The New Yorker;* and there is no denying that Mr. Huston and his producer have artistic ability—Mr. Mayer's plaintive, paternal concern notwithstanding. So there is no reason why the girl from *The New Yorker* should not have come to Hollywood to write a portrait of John Huston.

As a matter of fact, on further reflection, it appears that Hollywood is quite the logical choice for setting the precedent which will break with *The New Yorker*'s previous policy concerning the geographical distribution of men eligible for a literary portrait. For I cannot imagine any community other than Hollywood where the magazine

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is held in higher esteem, approached with more discerning appreciation, and looked up to with a more bewildering mixture of excitement, fear, trembling, and respectful reverence.

It is not easy to account for these sentiments; but it is likely that the magic of expensive luxury goods decorating the pages of *The New Yorker*—by which Hollywood sets its standard of *material* success—is only a surface phenomenon. Underneath the surface there are deeper roots. New York is (or was) not only the physical home of many who have made the long trek West to dig the gold of Hollywood (and claim to have regretted it ever since—a pardonable form of human self-deception); but New York was, is, and perhaps always will be the spiritual home, the level of the highest aspirations, for the "better part" of Hollywood. And *The New Yorker* is the symbol for this spiritual home.

Thus to write for *The New Yorker* is to have risen above "Hollywood" into a different world, to an intellectual level on and for which *The New Yorker* is believed to be written; in short, it is to have redeemed oneself from all the power, glory—and failure which is the better part of Hollywood. Any producer's wife can drive a Jaguar or wear a blue mink stole (but what is that, alas, when anybody else can do so, too?); anybody can peddle (yes, that's the word for it in Hollywood) a story for the movies if he drinks cocktails with the right people, hangs around long enough, has the right manners at gin rummy, and possibly a knack for dialogue; but it is given only to a few—ah, so few—to appear in the pages of *The New Yorker*. This is more than just to place a story in a respectable magazine, much more: it is an act of self-realization.

Next to writing for *The New Yorker* ranks being written up by *The New Yorker;* for without some such theory as this, I submit, it is difficult to explain why and how Hollywood responded to the challenge of the girl from *The New Yorker* as it did. Arriving with the *imprimatur* of *The New Yorker* she had all the credentials she would ever need to "crash" Hollywood.

She came, looked, and listened—and for weeks and months she was the center of attraction and worship. She was a careful observer; she took copious notes; she remembered my first name after one casual meeting. But she never seemed to say anything herself—except to ask questions.

These questions, however, were something else again. They were quite deceptive in their sophomoric simplicity. Listening intently, and with an air of an innocent child looking in wonderment and rapture at a lighted Christmas tree, she would occasionally interrupt the speaker to

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ask: "What makes you say *that,* John?" or, "Do you *really* think so, dear?"; just like that, as if it were the most natural and the most sophisticated question in the world. Perhaps more bewildering and misleading, however, was another set of questions she had at her disposal. She would simply ask for an explanation of what is ordinarily taken for granted, even in Hollywood. When somebody mentioned B-girls, she would ask innocently: "What are B-girls, dear?"; and then, when this was explained, just for good measure, "Are there *really* such people in the world?"; when somebody else (just back from Rome) held forth on the culture, art, and beauty of Italy, she would ask: "What's the *Quattrocento,* dear?"; or again, when somebody talked about Dreiser's *The American Tragedy* (another forthcoming movie), the girl from *The New Yorker,* again listening intently, would suddenly interrupt to ask the momentous question: "What's 'The American Tragedy,' Sam?"

Sometimes, if you didn't know that this was *The New Yorker,* these questions might be quite distracting. Thus they seem to have affected the Israeli Consul when, during a lively discussion of anti-Semitism throughout the world, she popped up with the question: "What is anti-Semitism, Mr. Dafni?" Mr. Dafni, the Consul, it seems, was quite upset. Perhaps he would have been even more bewildered if he had learned, a few nights later, that the same reporter reluctantly declined an invitation to a dinner party because it was the night for observing *jahrzeit.*

And thus she moved through an interminable succession of dinner parties—as if she didn't quite belong anywhere, just looking around and listening, and occasionally asking a few harmless, innocent questions. Ordinarily, as I was saying, she would have appeared strictly dull and "uninteresting"; and nobody in Hollywood would have had anything to do with her. Yet, invariably she was the center of attention and attraction, for this was no ordinary situation.

Journalists are a mighty power anywhere, but especially in Hollywood where publicity is, as everybody knows, both a profitable business and a veritable mania. Reviews make and break contracts; and if Hedda Hopper has got something on you, you'd better go and see your chaplain. The press prospers and flourishes even if the movie industry doesn't. The journalists find open doors, glad handshakes, ready publicity handouts, free tickets for Santa Anita, and a round of drinks anywhere along the regular beat.

But none of them ever became the center of the social life in Hollywood as did the girl from *The New Yorker.* Which isn't surprising since she was more than a journalist, much more. And the only time I

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ever heard her take a position on anything was to drive this point home, simply, but firmly and precisely. It happened when some assistant to the assistant director of "The American Tragedy" tried to find an excuse for not letting her see some of the rushes that were being shown the next day. It seems the press was excluded; and he was afraid if it became known that she had been present, the other journalists would resent this sort of favoritism. The girl from *The New Yorker,* listening intently and politely as always, straightened herself up just a little; then, looking directly at the man, she said quietly, yet almost curtly, like putting a little boy in his place: "Well, you know, dear, I am *not* a journalist."

She was, of course, right—absolutely right. She was not a journalist; and nobody treated her like a journalist. Hers was not a regular journalistic assignment at all; it was rather like a mission redeeming the better part of Hollywood for *The New Yorker.*

And thus she came to be the center of social life in Hollywood, the star performer in a grandiose show to redeem the better part of Hollywood. She was invited for breakfast, for lunch (Romanoff's, of course), for dinner, for afternoon parties and entertainment, at home, at the Mocambo, or the Colony Club. She was out on location; she went to every preview; she was flown to Las Vegas; she played baccarat and the slot machines; she was taken shopping on The Miracle Mile. She was always "booked" solidly; and wherever she went, she reigned supreme—although she didn't quite seem to belong anywhere.

She reigned supreme because Hollywood considered her the supreme test. Being weighed and found wanting by the girl from *The New Yorker* would be supreme failure; being weighed and found worthy, supreme achievement.

This is a hard test to be up against even with all the resources of Hollywood at one's disposal. For dinner parties and entertainment are one thing. But to prove oneself worthy of *The New Yorker* is still another: One must also be brilliant. One must have experiences that flash brilliantly against the screen of popular mediocrity; one must have ideas that are brilliant; and one must be able to express them brilliantly in punchlines suitable for the end of each installment of the portrait in *The New Yorker.* Thus at every dinner party she was surrounded by men who were trying, gallantly, at times, desperately and frantically, for the most part, to outdo each other in manufacturing brilliant experiences or in generating brilliant ideas.

This is a hard test to impose on anybody. As time went on, a note of anxiety crept into Hollywood's worship of the girl from *The New*

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Yorker, a gnawing suspicion that this was a game at which you couldn't win. This might do for a night at Las Vegas, but not for a spiritual test stretching over a period of months. As long as she was around collecting material (but not yet writing), it was easy enough to assuage this growing sense of anxiety by intensifying one's efforts of impressing her by giving bigger and better parties or by thinking harder and harder of more and more brilliant things to say. But, alas, the day would come when she would leave or withdraw to write her piece; and what then? Would anybody qualify for recognition by *The New Yorker?* Was it humanly possible to pass this sort of a test? Perhaps for a week end with the help of champagne and a hip flask of bourbon used by Mr. Hemingway to stimulate his reactions to the paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; but for a period of three months or more, and in Hollywood? How long can anybody—even in Hollywood—go without saying something that is just ordinary and mediocre? And how could one ever be sure that whatever she wrote would elevate Hollywood to the intellectual level to which it aspired.

If she portrayed the movie colony as a harmless, average American community, it wouldn't be enough. If she let herself go and wrote as *The New Yorker* sometimes would write, it would be too much. It would just be another Hollywood exposé. If she wrote "down" revealing the human-all-too-human stature of Hollywood—as she had done in the case of Hemingway—that would not do; for Hollywood, unlike Mr. Hemingway, cannot afford to be written "down." If she wrote too much about one person, this would make everybody else angry and envious; if she wrote nothing, the person would not be recognized; if she wrote a little, it might just be the wrong thing or (God forbid!) less than what she might say about somebody else.

No, this was a game too much even for the better part of Hollywood. Desperately and anxiously as its people tried to win the pleasure, approval, and recognition of the girl from *The New Yorker,* they knew all along that they were only her next victims.

Occasionally—at breakfast perhaps, looking over the wreckage of last night's effort to please her—they might even admit to themselves what and how they felt. They wished she had never come; they hated her; they hated themselves for submitting to the indignity of this test; they wished she were dead.

But, each time, someone would invariably reach for the phone and, with a brave wan smile, set the stage for another little surprise party for the girl from *The New Yorker.*

Hans Meyerhoff

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BOOKS

THE MIRACULOUS AYMÉ AND OTHERS

MAN & BOY. By Wright Morris. Knopf. $3.00.
THE TWILIGHT OF THE ELEPHANT. by Elio Vittorini. New Directions. $1.50.
CONJUGAL LOVE. By Alberto Moravia. Farrar, Straus, and Young. $2.50.
ALL ABOUT H. HATTERR. By G. V. Desani. Farrar, Straus, and Young. $3.00.
AT SWIM-TWO-BIRDS. By Flann O'Brien. Pantheon. $3.00.
THE WATCH. By Carlo Levi. Farrar, Straus, and Young. $3.75.
THE MIRACULOUS BARBER. By Marcel Aymé. Harper & Bros. $3.00.

The attack on the American Mother attains a new intensity and dimension in Wright Morris' *Man & Boy*. Mrs. Ormsby, the mother of the novel, rules with an iron hand not only in the region of emotions and *mores,* but she commands and transforms language as well. Mr. Morris has dramatized the extent to which much of her power comes from a mastery of language, an aspect of the American mother which has been neglected in most descriptions of her. Mrs. Ormsby uses language to make her own values devastating tabus. She is the absolute monarch, through her fund of formulation, of decorum, rectitude, prohibition, inhibition, and permission. She has at ready hand and for all occasions any number of Latin tags, Biblical maxims, and glittering generalities, distorting them invariably to suit the purposes of her own overwhelming and annihilating femininity. Once we remember how often the mother has first been a schoolmar'm, we recognize the cleverness and the justice with which Mr. Morris has exhibited the perfidious alliance of maternal tyranny and verbal glibness.

Man & Boy deals with a single important day in the life of Mr. and Mrs. Ormsby, the day on which the mother is going to launch a ship named by the Navy in honor of their dead son. In restricting himself to one day, and in his use of a modified interior monologue, Morris makes a fine and original use of some of the leading techniques in *Ulysses*. Indeed the father resembles Leopold Bloom as well as Caspar Milquetoast, and the climax of the book is his meeting with a young soldier who adopts a filial role toward him and who protests with

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much eloquence against the supremacy of mother over father. The young soldier, Private Lipido, declares that there would be "less heroes if the boys had known the old man would get a deal like that!"; and he adds that "I don't know this kid of yours, but if I had a nice old man like you this *Dear Mrs. Ormsby* would damn near make me sick." Subsequently Private Lipido succeeds in striking Mrs. Ormsby from behind with a suitcase as she goes up an escalator, an action which suggests the extent to which existence and literature have begun to imitate the comic strip and slapstick comedy. But this vain action as well as the directness of the young soldier's verbal attack serve chiefly to reveal how the Mother survives all kinds of attacks, unscathed and secure. She is a fact of society as irreducible and unconquerable as a fact of nature. She is superb, superior, indifferent, and in the end untouchable and opaque. Although she is literate, she would not understand a word of Mr. Morris' wit and observation.

Vittorini's *The Twilight of the Elephant* is lyrical and allegorical. The lyrical quality of the prose helps to redeem the thinness of the allegory, but it is impossible to miss the author's growing lack of conviction as the book goes forward. It is as if the narrator himself doubted more and more the ultimate meaningfulness of the story he is telling. It is the story of a poor family where there is never enough to eat. An aged grandfather increases the burden of desperate poverty, yet he is honored and cared for because he was once a giant in the earth, a builder of tunnels, aqueducts, power plants, dykes, and highways. A stranger arrives, bringing food and wine, playing a fife and telling stories and enchanting the grandfather by speaking of the proper way to die, which is the way of elephants who go off to die alone while they are still strong. After the stranger's departure, the grandfather attempts in vain to emulate the departure and death of elephants. Throughout, the narrative seems to be pointing portentously toward some fabulous and marvelous discovery. But apart from the suggestion that death itself is a freedom and a dignity denied or withheld from the very poor, the promise implicit in the tone of the narrative is never fulfilled.

Alberto Moravia possesses a sophistication and at the same time a lucidity so powerful that the reader is bound to be perplexed by the feeling that something important is lacking. And only on a second or third reading of his new novel, *Conjugal Love,* does it become clear that his great virtues as a novelist may very well be the cause of what is absent: his very sophistication and lucidity keep him at a distance

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from his subject matter and prevent that subject matter from gaining the larger-than-life reality which one has every right to expect from an author of Moravia's remarkable gifts. He does not struggle with his themes, nor with his characters; they have been subdued before they reached the pages on which one encounters them; subdued, arranged, conceptualized, assimilated into the silken fluency of Moravia's style and thought. Indeed, Moravia seems to be very much aware of this danger and to have taken it as part of the theme of *Conjugal Love*. The hero is a would-be novelist and a rich dilettante who, as he strives to compose a masterpiece, decides that it would be wise not to make love to his wife while he is writing his book. Just before he finishes his book, which he feels at first to be precisely the masterpiece he was striving to write, his wife is unfaithful to him with his barber. As he discovers his wife's infidelity, he also discovers that his book is mediocre, not the masterpiece he had supposed, and that he has misunderstood his wife's behavior entirely as well as his own motives and desires. And his misunderstanding has arisen because he interprets experience as a novelist, rather than as a human being. In the end, by accepting the humiliation of literary failure and the humiliation of his wife's infidelity, he achieves a superior insight into himself and into existence. Having seen that "there is nothing like extreme objectivity—that is, the forgetting of the links that connect objects and subjective motives—to encourage self-deception," he arrives at a sense of his own ignorance which is itself a kind of wisdom. The difficulty, however, is that the reader feels that this wisdom was present all along, and that it has not been realized through the events of the novel, but rather through the reflections of the novelist. Perhaps this impression is reinforced by the fact that the narrative is told in the first person, so that the hero is at once the object and the source of insight. Be that as it may, *Conjugal Love* is nevertheless a book in which every page is fascinating, and Moravia is an author of the first order, an author who is more interesting and important even when he fails than other authors are when they succeed.

All About H. Hatterr and *At Swim-Two-Birds* must be mentioned together because when they are connected with each other, they suggest the possibility of a new mood and indeed a new tendency in fiction. One is by an Anglo-Indian author, G. V. Desani, and the other is an Anglo-Irish work. The two books have much in common—a cultivation of wit for its own sake, a wildness and poetry in the writing, and a disregard of all the rich resources of the novel except those which hap-

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pen to suit the author's love of his own virtuosity. Moreover, both authors owe something to Joyce; how much they owe is not at all clear, since it is possible that they are inspired not by Joyce's literary example, powerful as it is, but by the same attitudes toward modern experience which compelled Joyce to the writing of *Finnegans Wake*. It was Cyril Connolly who remarked that Joyce was both a mandarin writer and a master of the colloquial; but this formulation is misleading, since it suggests an alternation of method and attitude, and not that unity of style which, in Joyce, as in Desani and O'Brien, must be termed the idiom of the lowbrow highbrow. It is significant that the effort to unite all the richness of intellect and learning with the common speech of the people—the most important kind of effort possible in modern literature—should be exemplified anew by two authors who on the surface seem so distant from each other: they are as distant as Ireland is from India; their common ground is the English Language; and perhaps to have the same language in common is the best annihilation of distance and separation. Both books have serious faults; both try to be *too* funny, *too* witty, *too* allusive, and *too* learned, so that, committed in so many directions at once, they possess no inherent logic of narrative structure, no necessary movement and conclusion, and thus might stop anywhere or continue endlessly. Yet the tendency of both books to restore to fiction and to prose style the great riches of poetry and comedy is promising and cheering and delightful. The promise is that if literature must rush headlong to extremes, the extreme of naturalism ("the curtain will now descend for seven days to indicate the passage of a week," as Ring Lardner said), and the extreme of lyrical and epic subjectivity ("I rose up one maypole morning and saw in my glass how nobody loves me but you. Ugh. Ugh," as Joyce wrote), then at least we may possess both extremes, and each overemphasis will help to correct the excesses and limitations of the other.

Many passages in Carlo Levi's *The Watch* have a wonderful eloquence, vividness, and vigor. Yet the book does not make a whole, and the reader finds himself in the middle of it making a fresh start again and again. This is partly due to the subject, which is panoramic and includes all of Italy soon after the second World War; and it is partly due to Levi's attitude toward his subject. He writes in the first person and in his own literal being as an Italian, a painter, and an author. But he holds back and refuses to involve himself in the subjectiv-

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ity of personal revelation: at one point, he actually says of a relationship which he deliberately keeps hidden: "It is a true story, too true for me to want to talk about it, or to be able to talk about it; at least until I am so old that the words will come out of my mouth like stones." And this refusal is matched by an equal unwillingness to commit his perceptions to the process and the order of a genuine narrative, an unwillingness which may be an aspect of Levi's complete fidelity and exactitude, but with the result that much of his book occupies some undefined middle ground. At times, it is the journal or diary of a human being of the greatest sensitivity and awareness; and at other times, the experience which is being reported transforms itself, such is its intensity and meaningfulness, into scenes which have the inexhaustible implications of true fiction.

Levi does make an effort to impose a unity upon his heterogeneous material in the figure of the uncle, Luca, and in the symbol of the watch. Luca is the wise man who has given the protagonist a vision of existence which arrives at affirmation through and after knowledge, and which leads to a sense that old age may bring with it increasing joy and truth. But convincing though he is in himself, Luca does not pull together the other episodes, characters, and events in a dramatic generalization. He remains like the others an intermittent figure who appears, is forgotten, reappears and is forgotten again. Levi's essential point of view is that of a bemused and helpless spectator who loves and suffers with the beings he looks upon, and yet cannot come very close to them. Sometimes he feels he is moving about Italy like Jonah in the belly of the whale; sometimes "I sat on the iron seat like a spectator who happens to be in a theater by pure chance," and at such times he regards the Premier making a speech and this shy man looks to him like a chrysanthemum on a dung heap; and frequently at other times, he moves in a setting in which "the streets were deserted and my footsteps resounded from the façades and the courtyards like blows hitting a hollow body," an image evoking the early Chirico. This very ambiguity and shifting and uncertainty of the narrator's role makes for the sharpness and genuineness of a good many passages, but it also makes the book not a single experience mounting in meaning, but a set of experiences superficially connected and actually separate and disparate and without a truly illuminating relationship to each other. Nevertheless the power and the beauty of certain pages are so great, and the capacity for the assimilation of experience so comprehensive that one concludes with the feeling that this may be the kind of a book which,

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knowingly or unknowingly, has been written as the preparation for a masterpiece.

It is questionable whether the genius of Marcel Aymé can show itself immediately and fully in any one book. Perhaps the best one can do is to recommend the reading of several of his novels and stories consecutively, for to take any one of them in isolation is to risk the impression that Aymé is merely a comedian, or merely a satirist, or merely a misanthropic, amusing observer of human vanity and folly. But with whatever book one begins, the reading of *The Miraculous Barber* certainly ought not to be neglected for very long. If we take this novel as the satire of a given time and place, the subject is the France of the Popular Front, and resembles in the most literal sense New Deal America. In his genre pictures of over-eager liberals, in whom knowledge becomes a form of stupidity, and overcomplicated primitives, whose very naiveté is the royal road to swindle and treachery, Aymé illuminates not only an era in France, but the same period in America, and yet also human nature in any time and place. Moreover, as a social observer he goes beyond politics not by ignoring it, but by exhausting its human possibilities, by showing how much of experience overflows and bursts through political categories or any other conceptual framework.

Aymé's comedy is terrifying in its ease, its impact, and its implications. It is as if he were able to don in quick succession the masks of Kafka, Buster Keaton, Swift, Chaplin, and Gogol—metaphysical fantasy, dead-pan and frozen-face hysterical calm, catastrophic exaggeration or disastrous understatement, precarious and pathetic shabby gentility in aspiration and flight, or hallucinatory description and invention—he commands all of these comic methods, and no matter how extreme his caricature is, he never loses hold of actuality: the reader never forgets that he is reading a real story about real human beings in a real world. If it is convenient to reduce Aymé's essential powers to a single formulation, one might say that he has found the ways in which an absolute cynicism about human beings can lead to a profound love of human beings; and a mature, awakened, conscious acceptance of human nature on the heights and in the depths. What other author has made cynicism a route to love? If there are others, it is doubtful that they also possess Aymé's compassion, his imaginative sympathy, his joyousness, and above all his unsurpassed mastery of sheer narrative, a mastery which holds all other elements in place. In most satirists, the energy of satire leads to fantasy and nightmare distant from reality or a cartoon

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of it. In most realists, the seriousness of reality tends to force comic attitudes into an intermittent background of interludes when the underlings, clowns, fools, and minor characters are permitted to come forward. Aymé avoids these characteristic tendencies of the satirist and the realist by making realism his means and not his end, and at the same time by making the story itself his center. The reality of his characters and the truth of their behavior are the beginning, and the conclusion of all his excursions.

An omnibus review of fiction compels one to general reflections and revives inexhaustible, immortal questions and platitudes about the novel. One is the recurrent scandal or libel that the novel is dead, or dying, or exhausted as a vital form. It may be true that certain forms of the novel are from time to time exhausted, but one cannot read the new novels of a given season without perceiving that, far from being dead, the novel has grown richer and more various, more supple and plentiful in possibility. And one cannot believe that some kind of novel will not continue to exist, some new form will not emerge, as long as human beings have a need to tell each other or to hear about the lights and the darknesses of experience. Moreover, the effort to criticize new examples of fiction brings one to a renewed awareness of how little there is in the history of criticism which is criticism of the novel, or which can be translated to the criticism of fiction. Most critical writing about fiction is either the propaganda and justification of a certain kind of fiction, or it is the technical observation and advice of a master and equally difficult to generalize or transpose. To come upon these limitations is to recognize the way in which criticism has been dominated for the past thirty years by Eliot's example and by his concentration upon the criticism of the lyric poem, for the most part. The value of this criticism is not diminished in itself, but its narrowness becomes obvious when we see that we cannot move with ease as critics from poetry to fiction or, for that matter, from poetry to drama. This is just what one would expect of a method of criticism which scrutinizes texture and style so closely and so intensively. Indeed the entire situation of present-day criticism, which leaps from the abstraction of technique to the abstraction and extraction of social and intellectual values, suggests the possibility of new objectives in criticism which will concentrate directly upon the nature of fiction, avoiding both forms of overemphasis.

Delmore Schwartz

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ELIOT AS PLAYWRIGHT

POETRY AND DRAMA. By T. S. Eliot. Harvard University Press. $1.50.

In this lecture, as Mr. Eliot explains, he is taking stock, asking himself what he thinks of poetry and drama now, after more than thirty years of writing both criticism of drama and plays of his own. His essays are always good reading because they are so well written, even when (as in some of his earlier pieces) he makes only one or two small points. In this lecture the plot has thickened: he is considering Shakespeare, Yeats, Synge, Maeterlinck; at the same time he is not unaware of what he had to say about some of those writers years ago; and in addition to that he is assessing his own experiences in writing *Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*. The result is one of his most brilliant performances: he has never been more agile, urbane, and cautious.

As a critic, Mr. Eliot is first of all a master and a connoisseur of lyric verse. His usual practice, especially in his earlier work, is to *assume* the poetry, and then by means of careful discriminations, and very apt quotation, to present a single sharp, suggestive insight, which stimulates his readers to further reading of their own. This gives him the air of knowing far more than he is willing to say. He addresses his audience (which is in dire need of instruction) with candor and courtesy, but rather mistrustfully; for he never forgets his responsibilities, to himself, to his readers, and to the poetic mystery of which he is the hierophant. It is essential to this method to be very gingerly about all general questions, "to halt," as he said very early, "at the borders of metaphysics." Thus he very seldom considers the form and structure of a whole poem, to say nothing of more general questions still—the subject of this lecture, for example. His great success as a critic has been due both to his practical familiarity with verse-writing, and to his ascetic regime as a prose-writer. Under his influence a whole generation has been anxiously exploring versification, metaphor, the use of irony and ambiguity, and the whole fascinating lore of the lyric poet's use of the English language. But drama is not the same art as lyric poetry; in drama the synthesis of incidents, characterization, and more or less concealed thought underlie the arts of language. And the question is, to what extent has Mr. Eliot's long preoccupation with drama increased his understanding of that art, and modified his practice as a critic?

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In general, it seems to me that Mr. Eliot is coming, though very reluctantly, to see that drama is a different art from lyric poetry, and that it cannot therefore be understood as merely a special instance of versification. He is much more disposed now, than he was thirty years ago, to look beneath the language of drama to the action (the "*moto spirital*") of the characters, from which their words come. This tendency is very evident if one compares his remarks on *Hamlet* in this lecture with the famous essay on that play which he published in 1919. But as his understanding of drama has deepened, his preoccupation with "practical playwrighting" has increased; and the lessons he has learned from the entertainment industry, as revealed in his plays and what he says about them, confuse and even contradict his growing sense of what poetic drama might be at its best.

In considering his own plays, Mr. Eliot does not mention *Sweeney Agonistes,* which I regret, because that play, or fragment, remains the most powerful and promising piece he has written for the stage. He starts with *Murder in the Cathedral.* He regards it as a success, on the whole, given the special occasion and the limited purpose for which it was written. He modestly points out that the subject is remote enough to be acceptable as "poetic," and that the church audience was willing to be piously bored, yet capable of being surprised. But he explains that, for him, the play was a dead end, just because of its special subject and occasion. In writing it he solved none of the general problems of poetic drama in our time. A style—which, at that time, still meant for him chiefly a kind of versification—was still to be found; a style capable of reaching the unregenerate general public, and of dealing with a contemporary theme.

In *Family Reunion* he resolutely tackled these problems: took a contemporary story and setting; diminished the role of the chorus (which is so important in *Murder in the Cathedral*) and above all brought his verse as close as possible to colloquial speech. He is still pleased with the verse: "What I worked out," he says, "is substantially what I have continued to employ: a line of varying length and varying number of syllables, with a caesura and three stresses." He believes that the first act is good, and that the diminution of the chorus' role was a step in the right direction; but on the whole he now dislikes *Family Reunion.* Its comparative failure led him to try to take the question of *dramatic* form more seriously; "In retrospect, I soon saw," he tells us, "that I had given my attention to versification at the expense of plot and character." And he decided that "the deepest flaw of all was in a failure of adjustment between the Greek story and the modern situation."

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At this point in the story of his adventures Mr. Eliot seems to tremble on the verge of a real understanding of poetic drama, as distinguished from the versified play. But he does not attempt to explore his insights any further. Instead he turns to the more immediate, superficial, and pressing problem of putting himself across on the contemporary stage at all; from the deeper strategy of his development as a dramatist, to tactics; in short, to the making of *The Cocktail Party*.

In devising *The Cocktail Party* he resolved, to begin with, to have "no chorus and no ghosts." He again used a Greek story—that of Euripides' *Alcestis*—but transformed it so completely that no one but himself has recognized Reilly, the convivial psychiatrist and good-natured Christian, as Herakles' spiritual heir. It was necessary to his conception of poetic drama that the play be in verse, but as he explains, "I laid down for myself the ascetic rule to avoid poetry which could not stand the test of strict dramatic utility: with such success, indeed, that it is perhaps an open question whether there is any poetry in the play at all." In this passage he seems to imply a distinction between verse and poetry, but not to suspect that there might be any poetry in the drama itself.

Mr. Eliot says that he is still exploring the weaknesses of this play, and perhaps his critics should emulate him in this respect, and not try to estimate *The Cocktail Party* until it has had time to sink in. But on the evidence of the Broadway performance and this account of its genesis, *The Cocktail Party* looks to me like the momentary triumph of Mr. Eliot's ingenuity over his poetry. Just because of this ingenuity the play is fascinating to watch, as a good mystery-thriller is. But the mystery, or puzzle, is the author's: how will Mr. Eliot bootleg his Christian message into our unsuspecting show-shops? As for the play onstage—the play between the characters—it is thin, patchy in style, and unconvincing. The first act moves amusingly enough, on the serviceable principles of parlor comedy; but compared with virtuoso-pieces of this kind—with *Private Lives,* for example— it is pedestrian and creaky. If the second act were to succeed as a play, we should have to be able to take the characters and their problems seriously; for this act purports to show the conversions, or changes of heart, of three suffering human creatures. This we do not see; but we do begin to discern the philosophy, or moral of the tale, and its emergence is interesting to watch. The third act is the weakest: we are in another clattering (though somewhat discouraged) cocktail party with the same characters; and the sensational results of sanctity, with which the story ends, are reported over the martinis. The conception of this art seems to

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have some of the sardonic savagery of *Sweeney Agonistes;* but the characters, their actions, and their language are colorless and abstract —there is none of Sweeney's nightmare intensity in it.

If one thinks over the series of Mr. Eliot's plays, one is inevitably reminded of Henry James's adventures in practical playwrighting. It is true that Mr. Eliot has certain gifts which James lacked, especially an intellectual inclusiveness which augurs well for his success. There is something theatrical and entertaining about the play of his fine mind even in his soberest critical essays; and if he continues in the direction indicated by *The Cocktail Party* he may invent a superior form of intellectual entertainment, akin to Shaw's, but more theologically and philosophically sophisticated. But if one takes his completed plays as a series of efforts to make a commercially viable poetic drama, what they have to teach us is James's melancholy lesson all over again: it is necessary to eliminate the cargo in order to save the ship; the medium of the entertainment industry is too light to sustain much poetry. *The Cocktail Party* floats in the near-vacuum of Times Square more triumphantly than *Murder in the Cathedral,* but it carries far less poetry and far less drama.

But Mr. Eliot's understanding of poetic drama is not limited to his tactics as a practical playwright. On the contrary, it appears to be deepening, at the same time that his plays grow thinner. At the end of his lecture he summarizes his understanding of the lost art of poetic drama in a passage which shows very clearly how far that understanding now reaches:

I should not like to close, however, without attempting to set before myself, and, if I can, before you, though only in dim outline, the ideal toward which it seems to me that poetic drama should strive. . . . It seems to me that beyond the nameable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life when directed toward action—the part of life which prose drama is wholly adequate to express—there is a fringe of indefinite extent, of feeling which we can only detect, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye and can never completely focus; of feeling of which we are only aware in a kind of temporary detachment from action. There are great prose dramatists—such as Ibsen and Chekhov—who have at times done things of which I would not otherwise have supposed prose to be capable, but who seem to me, in spite of their success, to have been hampered in expression by writing in prose. This peculiar range of sensibility can be expressed by dramatic poetry, at its moments of greatest intensity. At such moments we touch the border of those feelings which only music can express. We can never emulate music, because to arrive at the condition of music would be the annihilation of poetry, and especially of dramatic poetry. Nevertheless, I have

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before my eyes a kind of mirage of the perfection of verse drama, which would be a design of human action and of words, such as to present at once the two aspects of dramatic and musical order.

In this crucial passage Mr. Eliot means by "action," not Dante's *moto spirital,* which refers to every mode of the spirit's life, in response to every "range of sensibility," but only physical movement or outward deeds. This is the realm which he assigns to "dramatic order," and all the rest to "musical order." By "music" he seems to mean, at this moment, Plato's unheard *musiké* which I take to be another word for "poetry" in the widest sense. In other places he uses "music" more narrowly, to mean the art which uses the medium of sound only; but the word in that use would make no sense here. What he seems to be saying, therefore, is that the art of drama itself is not a form of poetry; it cannot be poetic without verse. As long as he holds that view he will, I think, fall short of an adequate conception of poetic drama. He will not know what to do with Ibsen and Chekhov, or, for that matter, the prose passages in Shakespeare. And when he considers the arts of plot-making and characterization and *dianoia* he will be at the mercy of the engineers of the well-made play, who agree with him about the realm of drama because, with their myopic positivism, they recognize no other realm of human experience at all. In all of this we must recognize the struggles of the lyric poet to understand drama as a branch of his art, instead of lyric verse as merely one of the resources which great dramatists can use for their wider purposes. His acceptance of drama is thus still incomplete; yet in thirty years he has come a long way; and his lecture, like all his work, offers us the exhilarating spectacle of a mind struggling with basic mysteries, and so always alive, changing, and instructive.

Francis Fergusson

POUND OF FLESH

AN EXAMINATION OF EZRA POUND. Edited by Peter Russell. New Directions. $4.00.

Allen Tate's essay on Pound's first thirty Cantos says that they have the "broken flow and the somewhat elusive climax of a good monologue," that we return to them for "the mysterious quality of charm" which we hear in the voice of the monologuist, and that many

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of the Cantos begin with myth or lyric and then "trail off into a piece of contemporary satire, or a flat narrative." Mr. Tate does not say so, but he appears to prove that the *Cantos* are an example of "American humor" as defined by Constance Rourke. Pound's admirers abroad tend to regard him as unique among his uniformly materialistic and philistine countrymen. Yet any American must see in him something strikingly native and "humorous." He is that perennial yokel who goes to the big Eastern city or to Europe and beats the inhabitants at their own game, or takes them in with his shrewd arguments.

There is certainly something humorous about the success of Pound among his followers. In the present collection of essays—by old hands like Eliot, Tate, Edith Sitwell, and Wyndham Lewis, and by several young followers of Pound, mostly English—we have, for example, the solemn treatises of Messrs. Swabey and Wykes-Joyce (a couple of British pots cracked by an American crank) on Pound's vision of a regenerated banking system. And we have Mr. Peter Russell's Introduction with its statement that the *Cantos* constitute an "epic new in literary history" because their "main theme is the power of money as a historical determinant"—which is a most stimulating idea for all those who believe that the main theme of the *Iliad* is vegetarianism and that Vergil's purpose was to preach against vivisection.

Pound belongs irresistibly to that great company of provincial American "intellectuals" of which Charles Augustus Lindbergh, let us say, is one of the best-known examples. Fundamentally the type is a primitive "liberal" and "naturalist." He believes the good society could be achieved, if it were not for the Forces of Evil, by factual practicality, the skill of craftsmanship, and avoidance of "abstraction" and the supernatural. If he is not actually a professor or a preacher, he would like to be. For he wishes to bring to our attention not only his native skill, whatever it may be, but his insights into what is wrong with the world. He wishes to alert us against certain furtive malignant powers—the bankers, Wall Street, the Jews, the British, or the Catholics. More than likely he will regard the regeneration of society as a problem in sanitation. When the excremental has been banished, all will be well. He will easily abandon his naturalism and liberalism and believe in magic or surrender himself to the blandishments of a political dictator. Ignorant of all that is profound, dramatic, and awful in human destiny, a stranger to the sensibility of pathos and sadness, he is natively juvenile and gross in every refined or spiritual exercise of the mind.

Theoretically there is no reason why such a man should not become a fine poet and philosopher. The eager young Englishmen who now

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form the Pound cult in Italy and England are clearly convinced that Pound is a universal genius. The more rational reader should not have much trouble in seeing that Pound is sometimes a fine literary critic and that in such poems as "The Seafarer," "Compleynt of a Gentleman," "Planh for the Young English King," the Mauberley poems, and parts of the *Cantos* he is a fine, though certainly a minor, poet. It should be just as clear that outside of his craft and particularly in economic and political matters Pound has always been an arrant simpleton. His admirers speak of his more dubious views as "compensatory exaggerations" and try to convince us that they are merely "incidental." But the fact is that they are radical and central, and one can only stand in awe of the self-discipline, or the luck, which could occasionally conquer so much omnivorous triviality, unreason, and prejudice.

Presumably there are two alternatives if you set out, as Pound did, to preach that philosophy, poetry, or "culture" can redeem society. You can admit that there is no easily discernible relation between poetic thought and the actual possibilities of social reality and therefore, like Plato or Dante, imagine an ideal world to which poetic ideas immediately attach. Or, like Matthew Arnold, you can try to translate your poetic ideas into cultural formulations so that they relate to the world as it is or may become. Now Pound, being the advocate of "the clarification of the word," of leadership, of intense spiritual discipline, ought to have proceeded in the manner of Plato or Dante. At least he should have conceived of the relation between the imagination and historical reality *as a problem*. But this he utterly failed to do. He told us only that the ideal world would ensue upon the "revolution" or the "rectification" of the word—and left us to envision a society which had grown regenerate or "clean" by producing a few excellent lyric poets (and surrendering itself, one must presumably add, to Mussolini).

In Pound's essay called "Hell" and elsewhere he has shown himself a fine critic of Dante's poetic language. Yet Pound's followers make the most presumptuous claims for his alleged affinity with Dante. Mr. Ronald Duncan exclaims that Pound can be compared only with "the Florentine . . . for there is no other." At a more sophisticated level is the theological jargon of Mr. Hugh Kenner, who in a manner now very fashionable appears to read both the *Iliad* and the *Cantos* as if Dante had written them. Mr. Kenner perceives in the *Cantos* a "world . . . of hierarchic modalities of vision." Only one of the present essayists, D. S. Carne-Ross, calls into question Pound's absurd idea that Dante's "whole hell reeks with money" and that in the *Inferno* "fraud" equals "usura."

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The best essays in *An Examination of Ezra Pound,* those of Eliot, Tate, Edith Sitwell, Carne-Ross, and G. S. Fraser, allow us to discriminate the good from the bad. The ill-considered Post-script which Eliot added to his essay and which appears to retract so much of what is said in the essay itself is a sign of the general uneasiness he seems to feel when writing of Pound, an uneasiness which may perhaps be attributed to an imponderably personal relationship. He tells us that Pound must be judged "on his total work for literature . . . on his poetry, *and* his criticism, *and* his influence on men and events at a turning point in literature." This could not be the basis of a favorable judgment if it were not apparent that by "his criticism" Eliot means "the notes of a poet on his craft." Even so, Eliot very diligently avoids those explicit strictures on the work of Pound which either reason or his religious principles ought to lead him to make. As for the young Poundians, they constantly allude to but never describe an ordered hierarchy of moral and aesthetic values which, they claim, contains and harmonizes all that Pound has done and thought. And we are told that if criticism does not perceive this hierarchy, it is "spinning webs out of its own inside" (Mr. Kenner) or lapsing into "adolescent romantic aestheticism" (Mr. Russell).

These essays should teach us anew to eye with suspicion the claim that a work of art projects a "world of articulate forms" in which (as Mr. Kenner says of the *Cantos*) "distinctions between theme and treatment, thought and feeling, the poetical and the unpoetical, the contemplative and the factive, should become factitious." These terms imply "form" and "content," and the idea that the distinction between them is not real in Pound's poetry is a little curious as applied to a poet who in writing of William Carlos Williams once ventured the opinion that "plot, major form, or outline should be left to authors who feel some inner need for the same." The fact is that Pound has never felt the inner need, or perceived the objective efficacy, of form, or even of elementary logic, in any discourse whatsoever except the short lyric poem.

In a successful poem, in all great poems, there is a final fusion of form and content, whereby content is refined and sharpened and form is related to experience in a manner so wholly marvelous that nothing the poet can say will have the power to offend either sensibility or intelligence. There are a few moments when Pound is able to speak even of "usura" in his poems without exciting our contempt. But our search after the "world of articulate forms" which fuses form and content and our praise for the poetic discourse which makes possible

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this excellent event ought to be accompanied by the skeptical doubt that the poet is going to accomplish it. And when he fails to do so, his utterances must be judged as we judge any other significant discourse. This skepticism would seem to be the condition not only of the criticism of poetry but, in our time, of the life of mind.

Richard Chase

FRENCH NOVELISTS AND ENGLISH MORALISTS

THE NOVEL IN FRANCE. By Martin Turnell. New Directions. $4.25.

Martin Turnell is the English critic who wrote *The Classical Moment,* a first-rate book on the seventeenth century French theater. *The Novel in France,* a study of seven French novelists, forms a kind of sequel to that book. It is especially good on Stendhal, Laclos and Mme. de Lafayette, writers clearly endowed with the traditional French sanity which Mr. Turnell admired in Racine and his fellow dramatists. With Balzac and Flaubert he is much less at his ease. The moral and literary crudity of the one and the other's "attack on human nature," leave him in the main aghast; and considering the whole tenor of his book, it is not unfair to say that such writers represent to Mr. Turnell the traditional French *in*sanity.

He has the right to his rejections, and in a concluding chapter he tries to make clear his reasons for them. Taking issue with André Gide on the value of the "French dialogue," Gide's term for the perennial clash of extreme positions in French literature, he says: "For the French novelist the issues are sometimes too clear-cut, too much a matter of black and white. There is little room for the kind of moral drama which is peculiarly the sphere of the representatives of the great liberal tradition in England—George Eliot, Henry James and Conrad." But this formula is not produced till the last minute. It remains quite undeveloped. And it is not necessarily continuous with what Mr. Turnell has been saying about his individual novelists: Flaubert's failures, for example, are attributed to his personal manias rather than to his participation in any historical situation or national mind. Thus Mr. Turnell is really confessing a bias; he is not summing up an argument. And his book remains fragmentary in the degree that it fails to develop any inclusive conception of the French genius.

But inclusive conceptions of alien literatures are outside Mr. Turnell's province as a critic. He is not Taine nor was meant to be

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Taine and he wouldn't be Taine for anything. He is a kind of John Morley who has read Eliot on classicism but who continues to pick and choose among French books according to the degree of their affinity to "the great liberal tradition in England."

There are advantages to this position. Mr. Turnell has his own kind of idealism and independence even if it does not always permit him to see the idealism and independence of other writers. As a judge of books he is never monotonous; the dreary critical amalgam is foreign to him. If the morbid Flaubert repels him, the morbid Proust attracts him so much that he ranks him only just below his favorite, Stendhal. And Stendhal himself has not always been as acceptable to Mr. Turnell's tradition as he is to Mr. Turnell: Henry James found him great but immoral. Yet Stendhal's moral interest, or part of it, is perfectly expressed when Mr. Turnell says: "He possessed the *vue directe* into the human heart, the power of seizing feelings at the moment of their formation and translating them with admirable lucidity." The sexual frankness that dismayed James in Stendhal has been domesticated by the liberal tradition and does not dismay Mr. Turnell. On the other hand, he is free of the naturalistic *obsession,* and can appreciate a writer who, like Mme. de Lafayette, owes her power partly to her grave and delicate feeling for "the disruptive effects of sexual passion on the community." And he is equally instructive on the subject of *Les liaisons dangereuses,* where, as he says, the boudoir is almost the whole arena of life and the ottoman almost the sole piece of furniture in it. This sinister great book seems as remarkable to Mr. Turnell as it did to Baudelaire and Gide, but he shudders less happily than they and analyzes more coolly. It is in such chapters that his liberal English detachment is most effective.

Excepting the chapter on Proust, the remainder of the book leaves us much more inclined to argue. The praise of Constant's *Adolphe* may be justified, as Mr. Turnell maintains, by its firm prose and moral clairvoyance. But this story seems singularly poor in invention, and as Mr. Turnell goes on to compare it favorably with several great novels, his touchstone is revealed as a sheer weapon. It is good, on the other hand, to have the fact of Balzac's appalling limitations forced upon us with all Mr. Turnell's persistence. The *Comédie humaine* has certainly enjoyed a unique fate in being at once so influential and so generally unreadable, so fascinating in its implications and so stultifying in its language. In their haste to arrive at the more palatable aspect of it, critics may have passed too easily over the other. Mr. Turnell reminds us that the other is solidly present; he also considers four of

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Balzac's novels in detail, and intelligently singles out the best. But when he concludes by saying that the *Comédie humaine* "proves nothing," that no "conception of the good life" emerges from it, and that Balzac was an imperfect artist because "his outlook was fundamentally immature," the quality of Mr. Turnell's thought and language seems unequal to the complexity of the critical problem. By way of brief reply it may be suggested that Balzac's immaturities, or those most nearly relevant to the problem, were the immaturities of the novel-form itself at the moment of its first full engagement with the evils and powers of our society. And the life which the *Comédie* continues to lead in the memories of its readers is not a phantom life. It is sustained by the great images of rooms and streets and houses, by the abrupt compelling juxtaposition of persons, and by other things that are really there on Balzac's page.

Balzac endows the man of the modern age with at least a febrile kind of greatness; Flaubert in the main strips him of greatness altogether. This is how Mr. Turnell sees Flaubert's purpose and why he devotes to him a long, very personal and, as I think, wildly incoherent chapter. As in the study of Balzac, the method of accounting for the man and his art is curious. His personal heritage and historical milieu are allowed substantially no part in his formation. There are only the two things: his moral will which expresses itself in his art, and his art which expresses his moral will. Thus he has, in effect, no society as a man, no subject as an artist; and the bad bourgeois world to which he pretends to address himself exists only in his imagination. Yet this spectral Flaubert has, it appears, a story. Having refused to take the steps whereby he might have "settled down and adapted himself to life," he evolved an "outlook" which was not "mature" (Mr. Turnell is an expert on the maturation processes of writers); and devoured by "cynicism" he undertook in *Madame Bovary* a "carefully planned attack on human nature." Such a career naturally leads to the law courts. "We may conclude, too," Mr. Turnell writes, "that it was this nihilism [in *Madame Bovary*] . . . rather than a few lurid scenes which really upset French *mères de famille* in the year 1857 and led to Flaubert's prosecution for indecency."

With this remark Mr. Turnell demurely accomplishes a literary revolution. The *bête bourgeoisie* are no longer the villains but the victims in Flaubert's story. If Mr. Turnell will not allow them any solid existence for Flaubert, he insists on the reality of their existence for themselves and for himself. Alas the poor *mères de famille!* Had the prosecutor who represented them in court possessed Mr. Turnell's

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special knowledge of Flaubert's secret purpose and real iniquity he might have won his case.

He did not win it, of course; and Flaubert, the savage critic of an age only less savage than ours, will be eternally brought to trial, in books like *The Novel in France,* by readers who cannot distinguish between his vices and the exemplary thing he made of them through persistence and genius. Our times are worse than Flaubert's but the persistence and genius are rarer. Even the ability to appreciate his qualities is failing among those who prefer to pipe shrilly in the dark. And in condemning with such emphasis the pessimism of Flaubert or of the whole "insane" French tendency, Mr. Turnell pretends to be associating literature with morality but is actually, it seems to me, associating it with morale. It should be added that he labors to be just to Flaubert as an artist, or rather as what he calls a "literary engineer." His justice, nevertheless, is of the kind that leaves the disputed baby in halves; and the more he dislikes something the more surgically exact is the process of dismemberment. "The last fifty pages of [*Madame Bovary*] possess the same qualities as the first fifty."

In the chapter on Proust, the last of his novelists, Mr. Turnell is in a far happier relation to his subject, even though he does commit himself to the astonishing opinion that no "community of feeling" existed between Proust and Flaubert, and even though he does give us, in the form of scruples and qualifications, nearly as much of his own quality as he does of Proust's. When he is not too busy saying "But it remains true that" and "It can hardly be claimed that," he is as perceptive a critic as Proust has had. Above all it is pleasant to find him engaged with a writer of whom he can say cheerfully, "his outlook, for all its peculiarities, was more adult than theirs." We need not worry because "theirs" refers to Balzac and Flaubert. Peace to all that. Let us be happy that Mr. Turnell, a worthy representative of a worthy tradition, has himself returned to adulthood.

F. W. Dupee

OF HERESIES AND FALLACIES

A GLOSSARY OF THE NEW CRITICISM. By William Elton. The Modern Poetry Association. $1.

Mr. Elton's pamphlet is a lovely piece of satire. With remarkable consistency of donnish tone and only occasional lapses into English, he has collected the most pretentious jargon to be found in con-

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temporary criticism. Not the sort of man to let the failings of his superiors go unnoticed, Mr. Elton has prowled high and low, with an almost malicious energy, in the work of our best critics. And he has done his job with the precisely proper grimace of dead-pan somberness: at one stroke he shows himself a gifted comic, the Buster Keaton of contemporary criticism.

Mr. Elton has arranged his glossary in alphabetical order, from *action, symbolic* to *wit.* There are also frequent cross-references, such as (cf. *paraphrase, heresy of*). Some of the choice entries include: *density, ontological; form, conventional* (defined by Kenneth Burke as "the appeal to form as *form* . . . " and for redundant clarification as the "equivalent of 'categorical expectation' "); *knowledge, qualitative* as distinct from *knowledge, quantitative;* and *control, spiritual* (the happy example for which is Yvor Winters' remark that Eliot's "rather limp versification . . . is inseparable from the spiritual limpness one feels behind the poems"). One of Mr. Elton's more memorable flights is *poetry, Platonic,* which ends with the high-spiritedness of a traffic jam: "Ransom's *Platonic poetry* and Tate's *Platonic poetry, allegorical poetry,* and *poetry of the will,* thus contrast with Ransom's *metaphysical poetry* and Tate's *poetry of the imagination.* Richards has comparable terms, *poetry of exclusion* for the former type and *poetry of synthesis, q.v.,* for the latter." Coming as it does like a sudden chime of lucidity, "*q.v.*" somewhat spoils this passage, and Mr. Elton might consider its future omission—but one should not cavil over details.

Of course, not all the entries are of equal effectiveness. Since he has chosen to mimic the very weightiness of his victims, Mr. Elton has been forced to include a large number of entries, some of which are of genuine interest, as for example, *belief, problem of.* Here his satiric gifts seem to desert him somewhat and one uneasily suspects that he has lapsed into comparative seriousness; but even this entry is redeemed at its conclusion by a magnificent quotation from Eliseo Vivas, "Freedom from moral preoccupations . . . is very unstable and cannot be long lasting in the normal human being."

By far the most delicious entries are the *fallacies* and *heresies,* of which I count, respectively, five and three. *Affective fallacy* shows Mr. Elton at his best: in one brief paragraph he dismisses as "examples of the affective fallacy . . . Plato's feeding and watering of the passions, Aristotle's counter-theory of catharsis and the Longinian 'transport' of the audience. . . . " This may seem a bit too broad, mere burlesque—but in the context it is entirely justified.

Coupled with *affective fallacy* is *intentional fallacy,* the first being

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an effort to criticize the poem in terms of its emotional impact on the reader and the second to criticize in terms of the poet's intention. That is, one may say the poem is "good," or better yet, that it has a "dense symbolic texture"—but not that it is "moving." For the latter statement suggests that the poem is being read by a man, with all the qualifications and limitations the word "man" implies, while the former comes with the untainted certitude of an empyreal proclamation. The poem, that is, should be viewed as neither written by someone whose performance may be checked against his purpose nor read by anyone whose taste may be brought to play in the establishment of standards. As Mr. Elton magnificently quotes one of his minor authorities, the poem simply *"is."* When we read further—in *relevance, doctrine of*—that most of Mr. Elton's victims reject as a "positive heresy" the belief that a literary work "must be tested . . . by observation of the world that it 'represents,'" then the blockage is complete: the poem cannot be related to the man who wrote it, the man who reads it or the world in which it appears. (Mr. Elton has not, however, been sufficiently wary: he quotes Coleridge as saying that a symbol "partakes of the

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reality which renders it intelligible." It can hardly escape the alert reader's attention that several fallacies and perhaps even a heresy or two are hidden away in this seemingly innocent statement—Mr. Elton should clean up such little inconsistencies in future editions.)

Nonetheless, in his *fallacy* entries, Mr. Elton has scored an important point, even if through the cruelty of satire: that the "new critics," while philosophically antagonistic to what they call "scientism," are themselves fatally contaminated by that which they abominate, for they are disposed to make of criticism a system, perhaps even a science, in which the personal act of reading counts for a minimum.

Mr. Elton is also very good at minor touches. In his introduction he notes that such terms as "richness" and "fullness" are no longer serviceable to criticism, and in his glossary he offers instead *density;* the superiority of the substitute is immediately clear. And even in his own style Mr. Elton mimics the tone of sandy gravity which is one object of his attack. Consider this sentence: "Although Ransom has thus far failed in his attempt to find an *ontological* critic, i.e., one who is equipped to do justice to the unique nature and epistemology of the poem, it is difficult to conclude that Brooks and Warren, on a non-philosophical level, have not been of immense service, practically, in directing concentration on the text of the poem itself." Note the cunning with which he achieves the effect of orotund weightiness in the use of *both* "a non-philosophical level" and "practically"; the touch of grave reflectiveness, recalling the ambassadorial style of Joseph Davies, in the "it is difficult to conclude that . . . have not been" formulation; and the skillful simulation of hesitancy, charmingly just this side of human, suggested by "practically" in its ambush of commas.

Satire necessarily involves injustice to its subject, and Mr. Elton occasionally fails through composing so broadly that the subject is no longer recognizable. He has omitted everything about the "new critics" that makes them interesting and valuable—their occasional passion before the work of art, their lively bias of temperament; all that is individual and indivisible in their work. Instead, he has attacked them at their weakest point: their heel of jargon. I suppose that if Mr. Elton were to direct his satiric talents against any other group of critics—say, the critics of the "liberal imagination"—the results might be equally cruel. None of us is safe now, and before the possibility of another compendium all must tremble. One would therefore like very much to know what is going on inside Mr. Elton's mind, but here I desist lest I succumb myself to (cf. *the intentional fallacy*).

Irving Howe

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THE JAIL

(*Continued from p. 515*)

Wisconsin greenhouses, and in the courthouse (the city hall too) a courthouse and city hall gang, in miniature of course (but that was not its fault but the fault of the city's and the country's size and population and wealth) but based on the pattern of Chicago and Kansas City and Boston and Philadelphia (and which, except for its minuscularity, neither Philadelphia nor Boston nor Kansas City nor Chicago need have blushed at) which every three or four years would try again to raze the old courthouse in order to build a new one, not that they did not like the old one nor wanted the new, but because the new one would bring into the town and county that much more increment of unearned federal money;

And now the paint is preparing to weather from an anti-tank howitzer squatting on rubber tires on the opposite flank of the Confederate monument; and gone now from the fronts of the stores are the old brick made of native clay in Sutpen's architect's old molds, replaced now by sheets of glass taller than a man and longer than a wagon and team, pressed intact in Pittsburgh factories and framing interiors bathed now in one shadowless corpse-glare of fluorescent light; and, now and at last, the last of silence too: the county's hollow inverted air one resonant boom and ululance of radio: and thus no more Yoknapatawpha's air nor even Mason and Dixon's air, but America's: the patter of comedians, the baritone screams of female vocalists, the babbling pressure to buy and buy and still buy arriving more instantaneous than light, two thousand miles from New York and Los Angeles; one air, one nation: the shadowless fluorescent corpse-glare bathing the sons and daughters of men and women, Negro and white both, who were born to and who passed all their lives in denim overalls and calico, haggling by cash or the installment-plan for garments copied last week out of *Harper's Bazaar* or *Esquire* in East Side sweatshops: because an entire generation of farmers has vanished, not just from Yoknapatawpha's but from Mason and Dixon's earth: the self-consumer: the machine which displaced the man because the exodus of the man left no one to drive the mule, now that the machine was threatening to extinguish the mule; time was when the mule stood in droves at daylight in the plantation mule-lots across the plantation road

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from the serried identical ranks of two-room shotgun shacks in which lived in droves with his family the Negro tenant- or share- or furnish-hand who bridled him (the mule) in the lot at sunup and followed him through the plumb-straight monotony of identical furrows and back to the lot at sundown, with (the man) one eye on where the mule was going and the other eye on his (the mule's) heels; both gone now, the one, to the last of the forty- and fifty- and sixty-acre hill farms inaccessible from unmarked dirt roads, the other to New York and Detroit and Chicago and Los Angeles ghettos, or nine out of ten of him that is, the tenth one mounting from the handles of a plow to the springless bucket seat of a tractor, dispossessing and displacing the other nine just as the tractor had dispossessed and displaced the other eighteen mules to whom that nine would have been complement; then Warsaw and Dunkerque displaced that tenth in his turn, and now the planter's not-yet-drafted son drove the tractor: and then Pearl Harbor and Tobruk and Utah Beach displaced that son, leaving the planter himself on the seat of the tractor, for a little while that is—or so he thought, forgetting that victory or defeat both are bought at the same exorbitant price of change and alteration; one nation, one world: young men who had never been farther from Yoknapatawpha County than Memphis or New Orleans (and that not often), now talked glibly of street intersections in Asiatic and European capitals, returning no more to inherit the long monotonous endless unendable furrows of Mississippi cotton fields, living now (with now a wife and next year a wife and child and the year after that a wife and children) in automobile trailers or G.I. barracks on the outskirts of liberal arts colleges, and the father and now grandfather himself still driving the tractor across the gradually diminishing fields between the long looping skeins of electric lines bringing electric power from the Appalachian mountains, and the subterrene steel veins bringing the natural gas from the Western plains, to the little lost lonely farmhouses glittering and gleaming with automatic stoves and washing machines and television antennae;

One nation: no longer anywhere, not even in Yoknapatawpha County, one last irreconcilable fastness of stronghold from which to enter the United States, because at last even the last old sapless indomitable unvanquished widow or maiden aunt had died and the old deathless Lost Cause had become a faded (though still select) social club or caste, or form of behavior when you remembered to observe it on the occasions when young men from Brooklyn, exchange students at Missis-

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sippi or Arkansas or Texas Universities, vended tiny Confederate battle flags among the thronged Saturday afternoon ramps of football stadia; one world: the tank gun: captured from a regiment of Germans in an African desert by a regiment of Japanese in American uniforms, whose mothers and fathers at the time were in a California detention camp for enemy aliens, and carried (the gun) seven thousand miles back to be set halfway between, as a sort of secondary flying buttress to a memento of Shiloh and The Wilderness; one universe, one cosmos: contained in one America: one towering frantic edifice poised like a card-house over the abyss of the mortgaged generations; one boom, one peace: one swirling rocket-roar filling the glittering zenith as with golden feathers, until the vast hollow sphere of his air, the vast and terrible burden beneath which he tries to stand erect and lift his battered and indomitable head—the very substance in which he lives and, lacking which, he would vanish in a matter of seconds—is murmurous with his fears and terrors and disclaimers and repudiations and his aspirations and dreams and his baseless hopes, bouncing back at him in radar waves from the constellations;

And still—the old jail—endured, sitting in its rumorless cul-de-sac, its almost seasonless backwater in the middle of that rush and roar of civic progress and social alteration and change like a collarless (and reasonably clean: merely dingy: with a day's stubble and no garters to his socks) old man sitting in his suspenders and stocking feet, on the back kitchen steps inside a walled courtyard; actually not isolated by location so much as insulated by obsolescence: on the way out of course (to disappear from the surface of the earth along with the rest of the town on the day when all America, after cutting down all the trees and leveling the hills and mountains with bulldozers, would have to move underground to make room for, get out of the way of, the motor cars) but like the track-walker in the tunnel, the thunder of the express mounting behind him, who finds himself opposite a niche or crack exactly his size in the wall's living and impregnable rock, and steps into it, inviolable and secure while destruction roars past and on and away, grooved ineluctably to the spidery rails of its destiny and destination; not even—the jail—worth selling to the United States for some matching allocation out of the federal treasury; not even (so fast, so far, was Progress) any more a real pawn, let alone knight or rook, on the County's political board, not even plum in true worth of the word: simply a modest sinecure for the husband

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of someone's cousin, who had failed not as a father but merely as a fourth-rate farmer or day-laborer;

It survived, endured; it had its inevictable place in the town and the county; it was even still adding modestly not just to its but to the town's and the county's history too: somewhere behind that dingy brick façade, between the old durable hand-molded brick and the cracked creosote-impregnated plaster of the inside walls (though few in the town or county any longer knew that they were there) were the old notched and mortised logs which (this, the town and county did remember; it was part of its legend) had held someone who might have been Wiley Harpe; during that summer of 1864, the federal brigadier who had fired the Square and the courthouse had used the jail as his provost-marshal's guard-house; and even children in high school remembered how the jail had been host to the Governor of the State while he discharged a thirty-day sentence for contempt of court for refusing to testify in a paternity suit brought against one of his lieutenants: but isolate, even its legend and record and history, indisputable in authenticity yet a little oblique, elliptic or perhaps just ellipsoid, washed thinly over with a faint quiet cast of apocraphy: because there were new people in the town now, strangers, outlanders, living in new minute glass-walled houses set as neat and orderly and antiseptic as cribs in a nursery ward, in new subdivisions named Fairfield or Longwood or Halcyon Acres which had once been the lawn or back yard or kitchen garden of the old residences (the old obsolete columned houses still standing among them like old horses surged suddenly out of slumber in the middle of a flock of sheep), who had never seen the jail; that is, they had looked at it in passing, they knew where it was, when their kin or friends or acquaintances from the East or North or California visited them or passed through Jefferson on the way to New Orleans or Florida, they could even repeat some of its legend or history to them: but they had had no contact with it; it was not a part of their lives; they had the automatic stoves and furnaces and milk deliveries and lawns the size of installment-plan rugs; they had never had to go to the jail on the morning after June tenth or July Fourth or Thanksgiving or Christmas or New Year's (or for that matter, on almost any Monday morning) to pay the fine of houseman or gardener or handyman so that he could hurry on home (still wearing his hangover or his barely-stanched razor-slashes) and milk the cow or clean the furnace or mow the lawn;

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So only the old citizens knew the jail any more, not old people but old citizens: men and women old not in years but in the constancy of the town, or against that constancy, concordant (not coeval of course, the town's date was a century and a quarter ago now, but in accord against that continuation) with that thin durable continuity born a hundred and twenty-five years ago out of a handful of bandits captured by a drunken militia squad, and a bitter ironical incorruptible wilderness mail-rider, and a monster wrought-iron padlock—that steadfast and durable and unhurryable continuity against or across which the vain and glittering ephemerae of progress and alteration washed in substanceless repetitive evanescent scarless waves, like the wash and glare of the neon sign on what was still known as the Holston House diagonally opposite, which would fade with each dawn from the old brick walls of the jail and leave no trace; only the old citizens still knew it: the intractable and obsolescent of the town who still insisted on wood-burning ranges and cows and vegetable gardens and handymen who had to be taken out of hock on the mornings after Saturday nights and holidays; or the ones who actually spent the Saturday- and holiday-nights inside the barred doors and windows of the cells or bullpen for drunkenness or fighting or gambling—the servants, housemen and gardeners and handymen, who would be extracted the next morning by their white folks, and the others (what the town knew as the New Negro, independent of that commodity) who would sleep there every night beneath the thin ruby checker-barred wash and fade of the hotel sign, while they worked their fines out on the street; and the County, since its cattle-thieves and moonshiners went to trial from there, and its murderers—by electricity now (so fast, that fast, was Progress)—to eternity from there; in fact it was still, not a factor perhaps, but at least an integer, a cipher, in the county's political establishment; at least still used by the Board of Supervisors, if not as a lever, at least as something like Punch's stuffed club, not intended to break bones, not aimed to leave any permanent scars;

So only the old knew it, the irreconcilable Jeffersonians and Yoknapatawphians who had (and without doubt firmly intended to continue to have) actual personal dealings with it on the blue Monday mornings after holidays, or during the semi-yearly terms of Circuit or Federal Court:—until suddenly you, a stranger, an outlander say from the East or the North or the Far West, passing through the little town by simple accident, or perhaps relation or acquaintance

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or friend of one of the outland families which had moved into one of the pristine and recent subdivisions, yourself turning out of your way to fumble among road signs and filling stations out of frank curiosity, to try to learn, comprehend, understand what had brought your cousin or friend or acquaintance to elect to live here—not specifically here, of course, not specifically Jefferson, but such as here, such as Jefferson—suddenly you would realise that something curious was happening or had happened here: that instead of dying off as they should as time passed, it was as though these old irreconcilables were actually increasing in number; as though with each interment of one, two more shared that vacancy: where in 1900, only thirty-five years afterward, there could not have been more than two or three capable of it, either by knowledge or memory of leisure, or even simple willingness and inclination, now, in 1951, eighty-six years afterward, they could be counted in dozens (and in 1965, a hundred years afterward, in hundreds because—by now you had already begun to understand why your kin or friend or acquaintance had elected to come to such as this with his family and call it his life—by then the children of that second outland invasion following a war, would also have become not just Mississippians but Jeffersonians and Yoknapatawphians: by which time—who knows?—not merely the pane, but the whole window, perhaps the entire wall, may have been removed and embalmed intact into a museum by an historical, or anyway a cultural, club of ladies—why, by that time, they may not even know, or even need to know; only that the window-pane bearing the girl's name and the date is that old, which is enough; has lasted that long: one small rectangle of wavy, crudely-pressed, almost opaque glass, bearing a few faint scratches apparently no more durable than the thin dried slime left by the passage of a snail, yet which has endured a hundred years) who are capable and willing too to quit whatever they happen to be doing—sitting on the last of the wooden benches beneath the last of the locust and chinaberry trees among the potted conifers of the new age dotting the courthouse yard, or in the chairs along the shady sidewalk before the Holston House, where a breeze always blows—to lead you across the street and into the jail and (with courteous neighborly apologies to the jailor's wife stirring or turning on the stove the peas and grits and side-meat—purchased in bargain-lot quantities by shrewd and indefatigable peditation from store to store—which she will serve to the prisoners for dinner or supper at so much a head—plate—payable to the County, which is no mean factor in the sinecure of her husband's incumbency) into the kitchen

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and so to the cloudy pane bearing the faint scratches which, after a moment, you will descry to be a name and a date;

Not at first, of course, but after a moment, a second, because at first you would be a little puzzled, a little impatient because of your illness-at-ease from having been dragged without warning or preparation into the private kitchen of a strange woman cooking a meal; you would think merely *What? So what?* annoyed and even a little outraged, until suddenly, even while you were thinking it, something has already happened; the faint frail illegible meaningless even inferenceless scratching on the ancient poor-quality glass you stare at, has moved, under your eyes, even while you stared at it, coalesced, seeming actually to have entered into another sense than vision: a scent, a whisper, filling that hot cramped strange room already fierce with the sound and reek of frying pork-fat: the two of them in conjunction —the old milky obsolete glass, and the scratches on it: that tender ownerless obsolete girl's name and the old dead date in April almost a century ago—speaking, murmuring, back from, out of, across from, a time as old as lavender, older than album or stereopticon, as old as daguerreotype itself;

And being a stranger and a guest would have been enough, since, a stranger and a guest, you would have shown the simple courtesy and politeness of asking the questions naturally expected of you by the host or anyway volunteer guide, who had dropped whatever he was doing (even if that had been no more than sitting with others of his like on a bench in a courthouse yard or on the sidewalk before a hotel) in order to bring you here; not to mention your own perfectly natural desire for, not revenge perhaps, but at least compensation, restitution, vindication, for the shock and annoyance of having been brought here without warning or preparation, into the private quarters of a strange woman engaged in something as intimate as cooking a meal; but by now you had not only already begun to understand why your kin or friend or acquaintance had elected, not Jefferson but such as Jefferson, for his life, but you had heard that voice, that whisper, murmur, frailer than the scent of lavender, yet (for that second anyway) louder than all the seethe and fury of frying fat; so you ask the questions, not only which are expected of you, but whose answers you yourself must have if you are to get back into your car and fumble with any attention and concentration among the road signs and filling stations, to get on to wherever it is you had started when you stopped by chance or accident in Jefferson for an

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hour or a day or a night, and the host—guide—answers them, to the best of his ability out of the town's composite heritage of remembering that long back, told, repeated, inherited to him by his father; or rather, his mother: from her mother: or better still, to him when he himself was a child, direct from his great-aunt: the spinsters, maiden and childless out of a time when there were too many women because too many of the young men were maimed or dead: the indomitable and undefeated, maiden progenitresses of spinster and childless descendants still capable of rising up and stalking out in the middle of *Gone With the Wind;*

And again one sense assumes the office of two or three: not only hearing, listening, and seeing too, but you are even standing on the same spot, the same boards she did that day she wrote her name into the window and on the other one three years later watching and hearing through and beyond that faint fragile defacement the sudden rush and thunder: the dust: the crackle and splatter of pistols: then the face, gaunt, battle-dirty, stubbled-over; urgent of course, but merely harried, harassed; not defeated, turned for a fleeing instant across the turmoil and the fury, then gone: and still the girl in the window (the guide—host—has never said one or the other; without doubt in the town's remembering after a hundred years it has changed that many times from blonde to dark and back to blonde again; which doesn't matter, since in your own remembering that tender mist and vail will be forever blonde) not even waiting: musing; a year, and still not even waiting: meditant, not even unimpatient; just patienceless, in the sense that blindness and zenith are colorless; until at last the mule, not out of the long northeastern panorama of defeat and dust and fading smoke, but drawn out of it by that impregnable, that invincible, that incredible, that terrifying passivity, coming at that one fatigueless unflagging jog all the way from Virginia—the mule which was a better mule in 1865 than the blood mare had been a horse in -'2 and -'3 and -'4, for the reason that this was now 1865, and the man, still gaunt and undefeated: merely harried and urgent and short of time to get on to Alabama and see the condition of his farm—or (for that matter) if he still had a farm, and now the girl, the fragile and workless girl not only incapable of milking a cow but of whom it was never even demanded, required, suggested, that she substitute for her father in drying the dishes, mounting pillon on a mule behind a paroled cavalry subaltern out of a surrendered army who had swapped his charger for a mule

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and the sabre of his rank and his defeatless pride for a stocking full of seed corn, whom she had not known or even spoken to long enough to have learned his middle name or his preference in food, or told him hers, and no time for that even now: riding, hurrying toward a country she had never seen, to begin a life which was not even simple frontier, engaged only with wilderness and shoeless savages and the tender hand of God, but one which had been rendered into a desert (assuming that it was still there at all to be returned to) by the iron and fire of civilization;

Which was all your host (guide) could tell you, since that was all he knew, inherited, inheritable from the town: which was enough, more than enough in fact, since all you needed was the face framed in its blonde and delicate vail behind the scratched glass; yourself, the stranger, the outlander from New England or the prairies or the Pacific Coast, no longer come by the chance or accident of kin or friend or acquaintance or roadmap, but drawn too from ninety years away by that incredible and terrifying passivity, watching in your turn through and beyond that old milk-dim disfigured glass that shape, that delicate frail and useless bone and flesh departing pillon on a mule without one backward look, to the reclaiming of an abandoned and doubtless even ravaged (perhaps even usurped) Alabama hill farm—being lifted onto the mule (the first time he touched her probably, except to put the ring on: not to prove nor even to feel, touch, if there actually was a girl under the calico and the shawls; there was no time for that yet; but simply to get her up so they could start), to ride a hundred miles to become the farmless mother of farmers (she would bear a dozen, all boys, herself no older, still fragile, still workless among the churns and stoves and brooms and stacks of wood which even a woman could split into kindlings; unchanged), bequeathing to them in their matronymic the heritage of that invincible inviolable ineptitude;

Then suddenly, you realise that that was nowhere near enough, not for that face—bridehood, motherhood, grandmotherhood, then widowhood and at last the grave—the long peaceful connubial progress toward matriarchy in a rocking chair nobody else was allowed to sit in, then a headstone in a country churchyard—not for that passivity, that stasis, that invincible captaincy of soul which didn't even need to wait but simply to be, breathe tranquilly, and take food—infinite not only in capacity but in scope too: that face, one maiden muse which had drawn a man out of the running pell mell of a cavalry

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battle, a whole year around the long iron perimeter of duty and oath, from Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, across Tennessee into Virginia and up to the fringe of Pennsylvania before it curved back into its closing fade along the headwaters of the Appomattox river and at last removed from him its iron hand: where, a safe distance at last into the rainy woods from the picket lines and the furled flags and the stacked muskets, a handful of men leading spent horses, the still-warm pistols still loose and quick for the hand in the unstrapped scabbards, gathered in the failing twilight—privates and captains, sergeants and corporals and subalterns—talking a little of one last desperate cast southward where (by last report) Johnston was still intact, knowing that they would not, that they were done not only with vain resistance but with indomitability too; already departed this morning in fact for Texas, the West, New Mexico; a new land even if not yet (spent too —like the horses—from the long harassment and anguish of remaining indomitable and undefeated) a new hope, putting behind them for good and all the lost of both: the young dead bride—drawing him (that face) even back from this too, from no longer having to remain undefeated too: who swapped the charger for the mule and the sabre for the stocking of seed corn: back across the whole ruined land and the whole disastrous year by that virgin inevictable passivity more inescapable than lodestar;

Not that face; that was nowhere near enough; no symbol there of connubial matriarchy, but fatal instead with all insatiate and deathless sterility; spouseless, barren, and undescended; not even demanding more than that: simply requiring it, requiring all—Lilith's lost and insatiable face drawing the substance—the will and hope and dream and imagination—of all men (you too: yourself and the host too) into that one bright fragile net and snare; not even to be caught, over-flung, by one single unerring cast of it, but drawn to watch in patient and thronging turn the very weaving of the strangling golden strands—drawing the two of you from almost a hundred years away in your turn—yourself the stranger, the outlander with a B.A. or (perhaps even) M.A. from Harvard or Northwestern or Stanford, passing through Jefferson by chance or accident on the way to somewhere else, and the host who in three generations has never been out of Yoknapatawpha further than a few prolonged Saturday nights in Memphis or New Orleans, who has heard of Jenny Lind, not because he has heard of Mark Twain and Mark Twain spoke well of her, but for the same reason that Mark Twain spoke well of her; not that

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she sang songs, but that she sang them in the old West in the old days, and the man sanctioned by public affirmation to wear a pistol openly in his belt is an inevictable part of the Missouri and the Yoknapatawpha dream too, but never of Duse or Bernhardt or Maximilian of Mexico, let alone whether the Emperor of Mexico even ever had a wife or not (saying—the host—: 'You mean, she was one of them? maybe even that emperor's wife?' and you 'Why not? Wasn't she a Jefferson girl?')—to stand, in this hot strange little room furious with frying fat, among the roster and chronicle, the deathless murmur of the sublime and deathless names and the deathless faces, the faces omnivorous and insatiable and forever incontent: demon-nun and angel-witch, empress, siren, Erinys: Mistinguett too, invincible possessed of a half-century more of years than the mere three score or so she bragged and boasted, for you to choose among, which one she was—not *might* have been, nor even *could* have been, but *was*: so vast, so limitless in capacity is man's imagination to disperse and burn away the rubble-dross of fact and probability, leaving only truth and dream—then gone, you are outside again, in the hot noon sun: late; you have already wasted too much time: to unfumble among the road signs and filling stations to get back onto a highway you know, back into the United States; not that it matters, since you know again now that there is no time: no space: no distance: a fragile and workless scratching almost depthless in a sheet of old barely transparent glass, and (all you had to do was look at it a while; all you have to do now is remember it) there is the clear undistanced voice as though out of the delicate antenna-skeins of radio, further than empress's throne, than splendid insatiation, even than matriarch's peaceful rocking chair, across the vast instantaneous intervention, from the long long time ago: *'Listen, stranger; this was myself: this was I.'*

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